

stanton  
macdonald-wright

ND  
237  
.M19  
S3

Duquesne University:

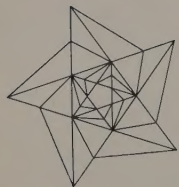








stanton macdonald-wright



A RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITION

MAY 4 THROUGH JUNE 18, 1967

NATIONAL COLLECTION OF FINE ARTS

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

THE ART OF **stanton**  
**macdonald-wright**

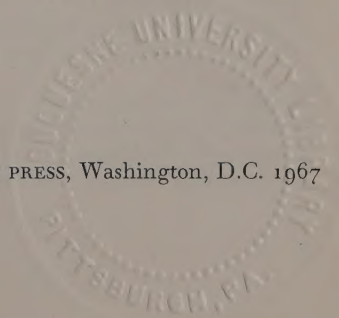
Introduced by DAVID W. SCOTT

including

A TREATISE ON COLOR

by S. Macdonald-Wright

Published for the NATIONAL COLLECTION OF FINE ARTS by the SMITHSONIAN PRESS, Washington, D.C. 1967



759.1

M135

ND237

, m19 S3



Library of Congress Catalogue Card Number 67-24900  
A Treatise on Color is reprinted from the original edition,  
© 1924 S. Macdonald-Wright

Designed by Stephen Kraft  
Printed by Garamond Pridemark Press, Inc.  
Composition by Clarke & Way, Inc.  
Smithsonian Publication number 4707



# contents

6	Foreword—S. Dillon Ripley
7	Acknowledgments
9	Introduction—David W. Scott
11	Stanton Macdonald-Wright: Selections from His Writings
21	Chronology of Stanton Macdonald-Wright's Life and Work
25	Catalogue of the Exhibition
62	Selected Bibliography
65	<i>A Treatise on Color</i> —Stanton Macdonald-Wright (reprinted in facsimile)

JUN 24 1970

## foreword

Stanton Macdonald-Wright has played a vital role on the American and the international art stage for fifty-five years. He won a secure place for himself in the early history of modernism before World War I. Subsequently, and for many years, he was an extremely influential teacher in Southern California. Upon reaching the academic retirement age, he entered into a highly productive period of creative activity. An inveterate traveller, he has exhibited widely, but his work in its full scope is very little known. His career presents unusual interest and significance, and the Smithsonian Institution is proud to sponsor, through the National Collection of Fine Arts, this retrospective exhibit which presents a unique opportunity to view the lifework of a distinctive and distinguished American artist.

S. DILLON RIPLEY, *Secretary, Smithsonian Institution*

# acknowledgments

All aspects of the exhibition and catalogue owe much to the superlative helpfulness of Mr. and Mrs. Stanton Macdonald-Wright. The National Collection of Fine Arts Committee for this exhibition, Mrs. Adelyn D. Breeskin, Mr. Harry Lowe, and Dr. David W. Scott, wish to thank the Wrights and the many other loyal friends and staff aides who made the presentation possible, in particular Miss Rose Fried, Miss Abigail Booth, and Mrs. Pamela Allara.

In addition to the artist, the following persons and institutions receive the Committee's thanks for generously making works from their collections available for the exhibition.

Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Allen, Los Angeles, California; Mr. and Mrs. Paul Blanchard, Pacific Palisades, California; Thomas H. Benton, Kansas City, Missouri; Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Boone, Los Angeles, California; Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Miss Marguerite Beatrice Child, New York, New York; The Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, Columbus, Ohio; Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, Iowa; The Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, Michigan; Mr. and Mrs. Lorser Feitelson, Los Angeles, California; Rose Fried Gallery, New York, New York; Grand Rapids Art Museum, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Joseph H. Hazen, New York, New York; Henri Gallery, Alexandria, Virginia; Joseph H. Hirshhorn Collection, New York, New York; Dr. and Mrs. A. T. Jagendorf, Ithaca, New York; Moritz Jagendorf, New York, New York; Sidney Janis Collection, New York, New York; Sidney Janis Sons Gallery, New York, New York; The Knoedler Galleries, New York, New York; Mr. and Mrs. William Lincer, New York, New York; Mrs. Lydia Winston Malbin, Birmingham, Michigan; Mrs. Henry Mayers, Los Angeles, California; University of Minnesota Gallery, Minneapolis, Minnesota; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York; Mr. and Mrs. Roy R. Neuberger, New York, New York; Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, California; A. H. Sutton, Los Angeles, California; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York.



# introduction

During the past fifty-five years Stanton Macdonald-Wright's activity has been wide-ranging and significant, but it has never been summarized or surveyed as it deserves. The National Collection has accordingly gathered a broad sampling of Wright's art and writings, and now presents this together with his brilliantly effective but practically unknown "art machine," the Synchrome Kineidoscope. This is clearly an occasion on which Mr. Wright should be enabled to speak for himself in the various media of which he is master, and so this catalogue contains no critical essay and only the briefest of introductions.

Wright's pioneering art in the second decade of the twentieth century, the synchromist period, is his most generally known. The exhibition gathers a large number of paintings from this time and provides a rare opportunity to review the range and quality of his earliest work. The experimental directions Wright took between 1920 and 1954 are here represented by oil paintings, drawings, watercolors, and sections of a mural done under the W.P.A. program. His intensive work of the past dozen years is represented by many paintings and a suite of prints. The survey is brought to the present with a major work of 1967.

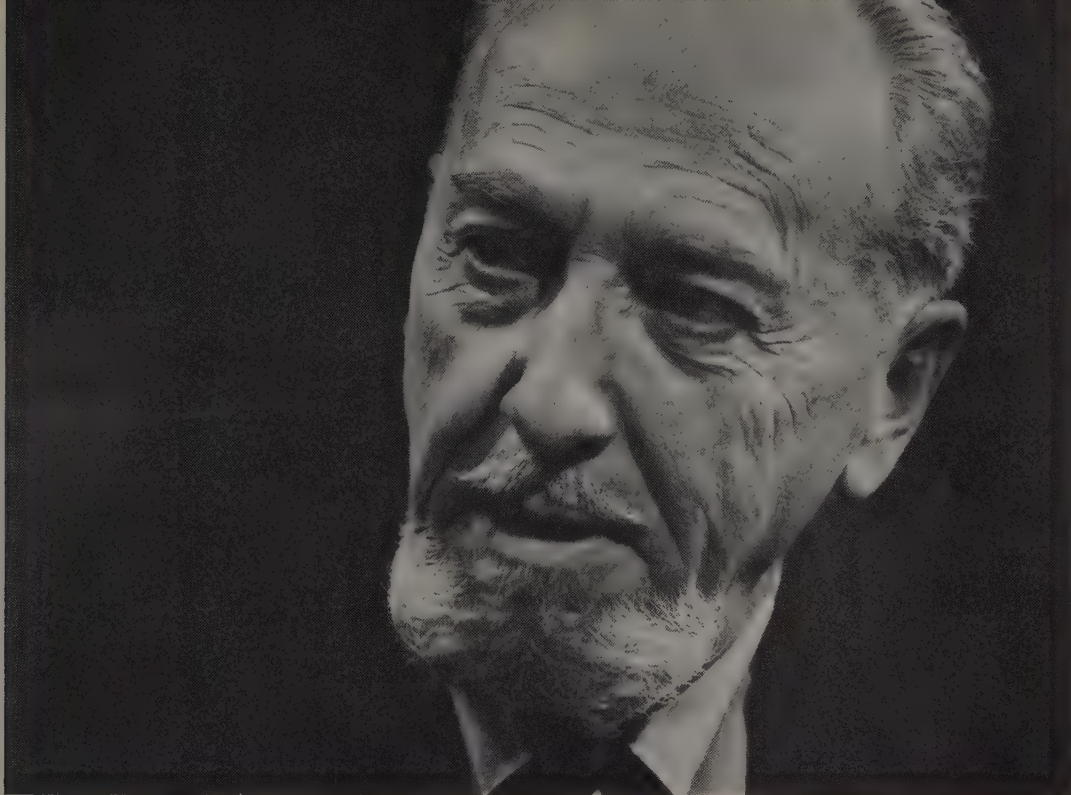
The following text reprints statements by Mr. Wright made over the same span of years, beginning with a preface to the catalogue of the landmark Synchromist exhibition in 1913 and concluding with a summarizing statement written especially for this publication. These statements bear directly on Wright's art and upon his life as it relates to his art. They have appeared quietly and irregularly over the years—usually as forewords in ephemeral catalogues to small exhibitions. To supplement this gathering of short essays, Mr. Wright has generously prepared a chronology of his life and has granted permission for the reprinting of his privately published *A Treatise on Color* of 1924.

This catalogue, therefore, should provide reference to a substantial number of Wright's paintings, to many of his writings, and to the salient facts of his life. Hopefully, it and the exhibition will bring better understanding and appreciation to an exceptional and talented American painter who has played an important role in our art but who at the same time has remained too little known. It is with great pleasure that we make the words and illustrations which follow available to the wider public they amply merit.



“To sum up: colour reached its highest development in Cézanne; composition attained its highest intensity in Rubens; and the greatest freedom in material form was represented by the Cubists. Thus the art of painting stood in 1912. But at that time the development of modern means had not reached its highest point. The purification of painting had not been attained. The tendencies of the past century fell short of realisation. As yet there had been no abstract coalition of colour, form, and composition. Colour had not been carried to its ultimate purity as a functioning element. Form had become almost unrecognisable but had just missed abstraction, its inevitable goal. And composition, the basis of all great art, had been temporarily abjured in the feverish search for new methods. The step from the condition of art in 1912 to its final purity, in which would be embodied all the qualities necessary to the greatest compositional painting, was not a long one, but until it was taken the cycle must remain incomplete. The last advance in modern methods was made by the Synchronists at *Der Neue Kunstsalon* of Munich in June 1913. This movement was fathered by Morgan Russell and S. Macdonald-Wright. . . Their desire was to create canvases of richly harmonious colour; but the difficulty lay in finding a new method of application. Neither of them was content merely to place suites of pure hues on the canvas, as an end in themselves. This would be to sacrifice organised volume for an ephemeral pleasure. Colour must have a formal and compositional significance, otherwise it would be but shallow decoration. . . . Both painters expressed their vision in the purest gamut of colour which painting up to that time had seen. Colour with them became the totality of art, the one element by which every quality of a canvas was to be expressed. . .”

Excerpt from “Synchronism,” Chapter XIII in *Modern Art, Its Tendency and Meaning*, 1915, by Willard Huntington Wright. Stanton Macdonald-Wright was his brother’s unofficial collaborator in authorship of the book.



## stanton macdonald-wright:

*selections from his writings*

**1913** Form to me is color. When I conceive a composition of form, my imagination creates an organization of color that corresponds to it.

As the juxtaposition of two or three colors produces a sensation of luminosity, I find it useless further to occupy myself with light *per se*.

Each color has an inevitable position of its own in what could be called "emotional space" and has also its precise character. I conceive space itself as of a plastic significance that I express in color. Form not being simply the mass of each object seen separately, I organize my canvas as a solid block, as much in depth as laterally.

The intimate relations of color to form and to space have never been deeply studied.

In contemporary painting as in the ancient, the coupling of some colors with certain forms produces perpetual contradictions that become more and more painful to us as our color appreciation becomes more acute. Certain painters have noted this antipathy between form and color, but the mere fact of having noted it has so filled them with wonder that they have been unfortunately rendered incapable of seeking a solution to the difficulty.

Space in my work is expressed by a spectrum that unfolds itself into depth.

Call to mind how amazing it must have seemed to the artists of the Middle Ages when, tired of the infantile panorama of tinted calligraphy, they found themselves able to extend themselves into depth, thus introducing their admirers into the very core of physical reality.

There is, however, a great difference between the "space" of those painters and ours; with them we *recognize* space by size diminutions (perspective), with us the quality of depth created by color calls forth a subjective emotion.

We are incapable of imagining a form that is not the result of some contact of our senses with nature, and the forms that result from this contact are infinitely more expressive and varied than those which are the offsprings of the inventive intellect. Thus, we are necessitated, in handling forms, always to keep them, in a sense, related to nature. In opposition to purely logical theories I remain staunchly true to this reality, for therein is to be found the foundation of all picturization.

*Galerie Bernheim-Jeune, Paris, Introduction to the exhibition catalogue (translated from his French by the artist)*

**1916** I strive to divest my art of all anecdote and illustration and to purify it so that the emotions of the spectator can become entirely "aesthetic," as in listening to music.

Having always been more deeply moved by purely rhythmic forms than by associative processes (to which poetry makes appeal) I have rejected all strict representation of nature.

Later, feeling that painting could, in a sense, extend itself into Time, as well as being characterized by spatial simultaneity, I saw the necessity for a visual foothold from which the searching eye could make excursions into the ordered complexities of the picture's rhythms. At the same time there was created a visualization of abstract forces solely by the juxtaposing of colors.

From this it is easy to see that I tend to establish in my painting, in contrast to other painting, the relation which now exists between music and its polyphonic development. Illustrative music is a thing of the past; today's music has become abstract and wholly aesthetic, its effects depending altogether on its rhythm and form. Painting certainly need not lag behind music.

*Written on the occasion of an exhibition at "291," New York*

**1948** In 1912 I found a method that was expressive of my art conception. During the succeeding eight years the plastic base of the Synchronistic procedure widened sufficiently to include my expanding interests and served me well until 1920. At this time, having entirely outgrown the

“academism” of my earlier intellectualist method I began the search for a procedure, a style, a “way” which would serve me in my mature years as well as Synchronism had served me in my youth. While the earlier procedure had its value as palpable form, brilliant and infinitely varied color-gamuts as well as a syncretic possibility in regard of angular and curved pattern, its greatest drawback was its very *raison d’être*, viz., its necessity for spectral color. Thus the first step in my search was both a negative and a positive one —I studied and experimented not only in ridding my work of pure-color limitations but also in supplanting these colors by a richer gamut, although a less brilliant one.

It was by this step that the semi-abstraction of primitive Synchronism gave way to a pictorialism whose animating subject matter and conception was preponderantly Oriental. The color was still, in large part, pure, but it was no longer stated in spectral suites. With this change I was able to incorporate certain aspects of linear rhythm which had always interested me but unfortunately the exigencies of the new style forced me to abandon a quality of *matière*—of paint texture—that I soon realized was an integral part of my desideratum. In 1925 I became assured that I had not yet found the right form for myself, a form that satisfied me, and until 1938 I varied all the methods I had previously used, narrowing and widening them, branching into the old fields of abstraction, non-objectivity and semi-objectivity all the while studying the composition of the ancient cultures from Egypt to Italy and from Assyria to China, learning anew to draw and to see not nature but the pictorial fact.

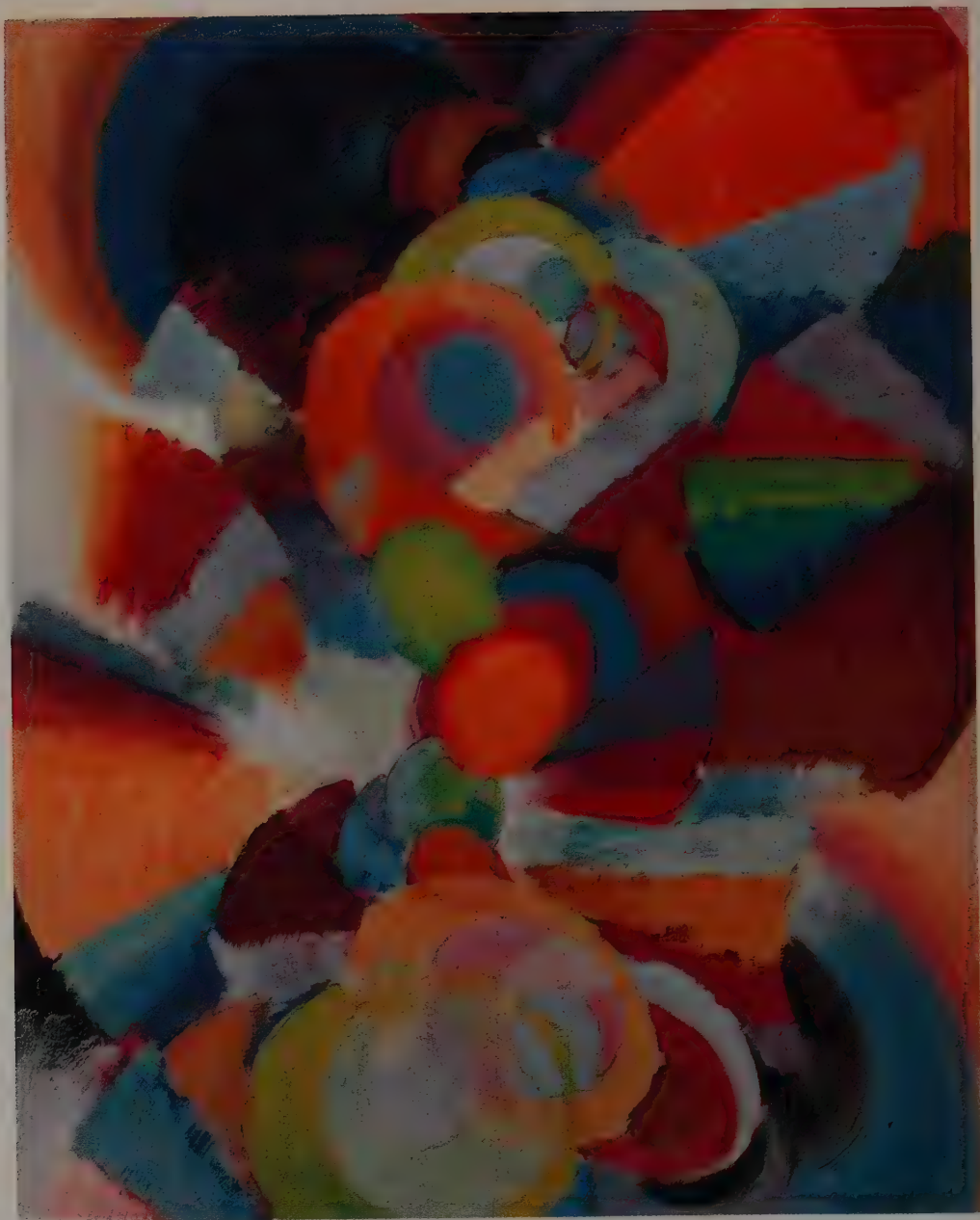
From 1938, for six years my work, with each succeeding exhibition, has seemed to my friends ever different, ever striving after a new goal. To me each succeeding group of canvases only represented the widening of the breach from any and every intellectualist formula—a coming ever nearer to that which I am, a less voluntary process and a more certain vision. In 1944 I reached the threshold of my second productive period when I found myself signing a canvas (*Hoofers*) in which I could dimly distinguish all those elements (all of them) that interest me in the art. There was the complete divorce from sculptural tri-dimensionality; there was the picture plane, that elusive paradox which is the seeing one thing and feeling its opposite; there was the pattern of pictorial behavior that permitted the line, the mass direction, any type of color; there was the objective starting point treated by the abstract approach; and finally there was a plexure in which creative ingenuity, almost in a musical sense, was imperative. Fortunately, this last need totally precluded the possibility of the illustrative approach.

I saw clearly as I had seen in 1912, but what I saw was a vastly extended terrain. The ground I had covered from childhood was still within my purview, but its meaning, in the sense of its significance, had altered relative to the newly unfolded field.

Thus there is in my painting a tincture of developed Synchronism, now sobered by added years of realistic study; an “obligato” line for whose inspiration I am indebted to the T’ang and Sung Chinese; a classical flavor from which I have neither the wish or possibility of being separated.

The body of my painting stems from Cézanne and Seurat, into the intricacies of whose great works I was first led by Morgan Russell—co-founder with me of Synchronism in 1913; from









*Synchrony, 1917*

primitive Cubism, which I consider the Semantics of modern painting; from the 15th- and 16th-century Persian-miniature interstice and the contemporaneous Italian development. I have looked at all art manifestations, including the fashionable and commercial, but I have clung, perhaps with more stubbornness than practical sense, to these formal arts that answer the needs of the formal spirit. Their opposites—Dadaism, Surrealism, Mechanism, Purism, and Expressionism—are to me only alternatives, as purely literary in conception as the various Scene-isms of our popular periodicals.

This is not a manifesto. It is more of a confession. But it is also a way of responding to the, at times, fatiguing questions, “what are you doing, why are you doing it, and why don’t you paint as you did thirty years, twenty years, ten years, two years ago?”

The final answer to all these and similar interrogations, over and above the reasoned analysis that memory gives me is—I paint as I do because that is the way I paint.

*The Stendahl Galleries, Los Angeles, The Way I Paint, from the exhibition catalogue.*

31

- 1954 Any exhibition of serious painting might be considered a criticism of sterile artistic formulism or stubborn *parti pris*; for, if an artist condemns himself to such shallow and pinched ruts of intellectual theory, he produces no more than some sort of factitious construct or an example of stultified academism. The study of great art should convince us that the creating progressus must never be submitted to the transitory dictum of the prefabricator or seduced by the desire to emulate the prevailing taste.

*Esther Robles Gallery, Los Angeles, from the exhibition catalogue: “evocations, gods, places, things—”*

- 1956 My painting is abstract both in content and form. Its content is a concept; its form is independent of any specific objective form. It is unrelated to contemporary abstract art, which too often is free decoration, a sally into exotic shapes, a medley of lines and textures called “psychographic,” an attempt at inventing a pseudo-metaphysical “space” or, at the worst, pure exhibitionism. Within its verbose and obscure semantics it makes use of the term “calligraphic,” and, as this has a definite meaning, it might be applied as a measuring rod to the painting. In the pure sense of the word, all abstract painting is a personal calligraphy, but, in the old Oriental sense of expressive values, the understanding of calligraphy can be approached by three paths:

1. writing that communicates everyday happenings (non-germane in the present context),
2. technically formal and brilliant expert writing (bravura),
3. the making of ideographs whose form is the cast shadow of the concept—the outward manifestation of the generating idea.

This last, far from being “psychographic,” is always under the strictest control, the fortuitous playing no part in its construction—it is magistrally evocative of a profound psychological meaning. It is neither ingenuous as in the first type nor mechanical as in the second, and to confound it with either of these is to mistake a caricature for an icon.

Needless to say, I do not pretend to have discovered this approach; but I do claim to have recalled to painters' minds this discipline that could give greater scope and durability to their art. *Galerie Arnaud, Paris, Preface to the exhibition catalogue (translated from his French by the artist)*

1956 Following a generation of study in retirement I would like to recall myself to your memory by quoting the article "Thirty Years of Independent Art" by Waldemar George in *L'Amour de l'Art* for 1926: "... the Synchromist movement of which the Americans Wright and Morgan Russell were the theorists and which caused a great reverberation." This "movement" was launched from Bernheim-Jeune in 1913. Shortly thereafter the war broke out, and in 1916 pressing business forced me to return to America where I took a studio in New York. At that time the career of a painter was a continual battle with the American artists and the American public, and at the end of three years, bored by the little-understood imitations of European painting, I fled to California. To tell the truth I was discontented with my own tendencies—the original Synchromist theories, like all other academic theories, because of their inherent shackles, had finally become stultifying to me, and it was with enthusiasm that I gave myself over to a search for an artistic form free of all limitations—a form that would answer my needs. Unconsciously I was led by my studies toward the Orient via medieval Europe, being stripped en route of my hierodulic taste for Greek form. It was now that my years of exile from the exhibition field began; I worked at painting, of course, continuously but in a sort of psychologic void trying this, trying that, without halt and also without any satisfaction. As I had to earn a living, I was an employee of the government, I lectured at several universities on art history and Oriental aesthetic, and I lived in Japan in 1937 and again in 1952–53 for the purpose of studying Chinese calligraphy and the ideas of Zen. At the end of 1953, at the age of 63, having finally freed myself from the weight of former ideas, I felt that I was on the trail of those art qualities relative to me—I mean that I had thrown overboard all my previous preconceptions, and was ready to paint my best works.

At first I saw my new painting with a certain astonishment, for I had made the "great circle," coming back after 35 years to an art that was, superficially, not unlike the canvases of my youth. However, at bottom there was a great difference: I had achieved an *interior realism*, what is called *yūgen* by the Japanese. This is a sense of reality which cannot be seen but which is evident by feeling, and I am certain that this quality of hidden reality was what I felt to be lacking in my younger days. This quality can be created neither by intellectual means nor by the will—it is necessary that the artist be "taken over" by an all encompassing idea. Dante stated: "*chi pinge figura si non puo esser lei non la puo porre*," that is to say that the artist must entirely "become" that which he paints; he should (from the standpoint of a program) lose himself altogether during the exteriorization of the picture.

Thus my painting is both abstract and not abstract. It is engendered by a subject of ideas which are *concepts*, not *things*. For me these concept-subjects are only a starting point, and I do not demand that they be considered either the *raison d'être* or the nub of my art.





*Hoofers, 1944*



*Raigo, 1955*



While it is satisfying to know that world painting has unconsciously followed the dicta that future art must be pure abstraction as stated in the Synchronist preface of 1913, the time has come to give this abstract art a deeper significance than most contemporary art envisages. While I cannot claim the discovery of this aesthetic terrain, I can and do claim to have found again for art a land that is no longer devoid of the human spirit.

*Gallery unknown, Paris, Foreword to the exhibition catalogue (translated from his French by the artist)*

1967 From an early age my conception of art has changed but minimally. I still revere the late archaic Greeks, the cathedral of Moissac, the frescoes of Piero della Francesca, Van der Goes' *Nativity*, Michelangelo, Cézanne; the Han zoomorphs and human figurines, and Sung painting; the great Persian miniatures and many of the Buddhist paintings of Japan up to the Tokugawa era. I also feel a deep admiration for Oriental décor especially where color and line are in sensitive evidence. It is thus obvious that for me art has to have a meaning within the limitations of the art itself, a form built of its *prima materia* whose ultimate significance is greater than any one or the sum of its parts. Its full effect must be unitary and pose no questions. I do not attempt to escape the impact of the visible world nor do I court it, and I believe that making art is being acted upon and not a willed activity. I learned my metier many years ago, and my knowledge has become unconscious because it is habitual. I am fundamentally interested in what to me is beauty—everywhere, in women, animals, the sea and hills, in ideas, music, architecture, poetry. I am not at all stylish, for my pictures are always hoping and searching for beauty; indeed this is the way I paint and why. I regret that the painters of the contemporary trend do not see eye to eye with me, but I am not unhappy that I do not see eye to eye with them. I see no indications that art—and I include music and poetry—will very soon lay aside its present farfetched theories and revert to a more human expressiveness. I have never had any faith in the art-cultural aspirations of any general public from antiquity to tomorrow, and I'm quite sure that the public has no faith in, or knowledge of, the paramount and universal importance that the artist's taste has played in all civilization up to the last fifty years.

It is easy to see to what extent I have outlived my era, but I am willing to play the game of collective integration.

"Well, now that we have seen each other," said the Unicorn, "if you'll believe in me, I'll believe in you. Is that a bargain?"

*Written on the occasion of the present exhibition*

# chronology of stanton macdonald-wright's life and work

*In anticipation of this publication, the National Collection of Fine Arts asked Mr. Wright if he would provide autobiographical notes for use in preparing this section. He responded with a lively, detailed summary of his personal and professional history, giving both factual information and commentary. We are pleased to present his text verbatim, written in Japan and California late in 1966.*

1890 Born in Charlottesville, Virginia, July 8th.

1893–1900 Passed early childhood in Lynchburg, Virginia, and at the age of five began the study of art under private tutors.

1900 Came with family to Santa Monica, California.

1903–06 Attended and was expelled from a number of private and public schools.

Ran away from home in 1904. Signed on as cabin boy in a “wind-jammer” bound for Nagasaki, Japan, but deserted the ship at Honolulu and went to the island of Maui, where he lived for a short time with the natives in the area of Mokuwao.

1904–05 Studied under Joseph Greenbaum, and at the Art Students’ League in Los Angeles under Warren Hedges.

1907–12 Married Ida Wyman. In August 1907 embarked from New York for France. Studied in Paris for the next eighteen months at the Sorbonne and, briefly, at the Académie Colorossi, Académie Julien, and École des Beaux Arts. Teachers during this period included Tournes, J. E. Blanche,

Simon, Albert Besnard, Caro-Delvaillie, and Jean-Paul Laurens. He did most of his real studying, however, in the great museums of Europe. In Paris, at the Salon d’Automne of 1910, he exhibited a portrait of a young woman which was moderately modern from the standpoint of color; and in 1912, at the Salon des Indépendents, he showed a large figurative canvas, done with pure color, which had been painted two years earlier.

In late 1910 or early 1911 met Morgan Russell, and with him studied color under Tudor-Hart. At this time Macdonald-Wright read the color theories of Chevreul, which suggested cursory reading in von Helmholtz, Rood, and Blanc.

From 1911 to World War I divided his time between the studio in Paris and a villa at Cassis that fronted the Mediterranean.

1912 Painted a Synchrony, nine by four feet, whose forms were based on a Michelangelo *Slave*, and sold it to Jean Dracopoli the same year. This was the first Synchrony to be bought by a collector.

Became interested at this time in Oriental art, to which his attention had been called by Focillon.

1913 The first Synchronist show was held at the Neue Kunst Salon in Munich, and the second at Galerie Bernheim-Jeune in Paris. These were soon followed by exhibitions in Milan, London, and Warsaw. Returned to the United States toward the end of 1913 and for several months lived in New York. There, in March 1914, Synchronist canvases were exhibited at the Carroll Galleries. Returned in April to Paris with his brother, Willard Huntington Wright, remaining there until the outbreak of the war in August. The brothers then moved to London, where they shared quarters for two years and collaborated on books subsequently published in New York:

*Modern Art, Its Tendency and Meaning; The Creative Will; and The Future of Painting.*

1916–18 Decided to repatriate himself. Returned to New York on the last voyage made by the *Lusitania* before it was blown up, and for some time lived in a flat in Hell's Kitchen. Exhibited at Stieglitz's "291" gallery, Montross Gallery, and Daniels Gallery.

1919 Went to California. Married Jeanne Redman, and settled in Santa Monica.

Produced the first full-length, stop-motion film ever made in full color, drawing for it at least five thousand pictures, each three by four feet, in pastel. The negative of this film was destroyed in the early twenties in an explosion at the Blum Laboratories in Hollywood. Experimented at the same time with color films—aided by an expert in this field, Walter Wright (no relation). The two soon developed an additive color process for motion pictures, and several years later patented it under the name of the Synchrome Corporation. While working on this process, Macdonald-Wright made certain technical discoveries that formed the basis of projection for the kinetic color machine he perfected forty years later, the Synchrome Kineidoscope.

1920 Not satisfied with the orientation of modern painting or the personal academism of his own Synchromism, he began researches in new areas of world art and retired from the exhibition field for more than thirty years.

1922–30 Directed the Art Students' League in Los Angeles, where he had studied before going to Europe.

1923 Pursued an earlier interest in Oriental art, Chinese calligraphy, Taoism, and Zen. Already proficient in French, Spanish, and Italian, he now began the study of Chinese and Japanese.

1924 Wrote *A Treatise on Color* for his students (privately printed, Los Angeles). [The book is reprinted in full as a supplement to this catalogue.]

1925–27 Made experiments in Synchromistic stage settings, utilizing abstract color, for the Santa Monica Theater Guild, serving there as director for three years. In addition to designing sets, wrote for the Guild four "fantastic satires" concerned with states of unconsciousness.

1927–32 Exhibited with Morgan Russell: Los Angeles County Museum (1927, 1932); Oakland Art Gallery, Oakland, California (1930); Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco (1931); Stendahl Galleries, Los Angeles (1932). In 1931 went to New York, and in 1932 had a one-man show at Stieglitz's "An American Place." Returned to California the same year.

Throughout the thirties made a great many drawings, and did stonecutting in marble and onyx.

Wrote *The Basis of Culture* in 1932 (unpublished).

1933–35 Painted an entire mural for the Santa Monica Library without assistants; the mural was erected after eighteen months of work. [Mural now in the permanent collection of the National Collection of Fine Arts.]

1935–42 Appointed Director for Southern California under the W.P.A. Art Project. Resigned in 1937 because of illness and went to Japan, remaining there a year. After his return he again worked for the W.P.A., but in the capacity of Technical Advisor for seven western states.

While in the employ of the government he became interested in the possibilities of

architectural decoration, chiefly mosaics and a form of *opus sectile*. Designed mosaics for public buildings in many Southern California communities (Santa Monica, Southgate, Long Beach, and others), and invented another medium, called Petrachrome, for architectural decoration on walls. In the Petrachrome process aggregates of colored stones and coloring matter are added to Medusa cement, which is then cast on extruded metal lath in pictorial segments, polished, and set in the wall.

Wrote for governmental use numerous brochures treating of forms of artistic techniques. Collaborated with Albert King on the *History of Mosaics*. In the late thirties wrote art criticism for *Rob Wagner's Script* (published in Hollywood, California).

1942-52 Taught art history, Oriental aesthetics, and iconography (introducing this course into the curriculum) at U.C.L.A., and, in various summer sessions, at U.S.C., Scripps College, and the University of Hawaii—but never ceased painting. Was attracted to certain Buddhist subjects. Exhibited only three times in one-man shows: Stendahl Galleries and Art Center School (1948) in Los Angeles, and Honolulu Academy of Art (1949).

Wrote, among others, the following articles: "Blue-print for a Textbook on Art" (*College Art Journal*, 1945); "Some Aspects of Sung Painting" (*Magazine of Art*, 1949); "Approaches to Oriental and Occidental Art" (University of Hawaii, 1951). Extracts from *Beyond Aesthetics* were published in translation in a Japanese periodical in 1955.

1952-53 Married Jean Sutton. Lived for several months on the island of Maui, Hawaii, there making many drawings of the landscape. In October 1952, in Japan as a

Fulbright exchange professor, he lectured briefly at the Kyoiku Daigaku [Tokyo University of Education], but owing to illness was compelled to return to the United States early in 1953. Acquired before leaving, however, a number of ancient Buddhist paintings, the basis of his present collection.

1954-55 In 1954 resigned from U.C.L.A., his short academic career happily at an end. His health to some degree restored, he now devoted all his time to painting. The years of experimentation were over. For five or six years painted only nonobjective canvases, then both nonobjective and abstract canvases.

1954 also marked his reentry into the exhibition field. A major retrospective exhibition was presented by the Los Angeles County Museum (1956), one-man shows by the Rose Fried Gallery (1955, 1965), Duveen-Graham Gallery (1956), Esther Robles Gallery (1963, 1965), in the United States, and by galleries in Paris (1956) and Rome (1958). His recent work has hung in group shows throughout the United States, in France, Switzerland, Brazil, and Japan.

1956-58 Went to Europe and Japan in 1956 and again in 1958. Since 1958 has passed five months each year at Kenninji, a Zen monastery in the center of Kyoto, Japan. Having studied Zen desultorily for thirty years, has found it altogether unrelated to the Western mind.

1959-62 Worked on ideas conceived in 1908 and first mentioned in *The Future of Painting*. Fifty years of interest and sporadic experiments now resulted in the Synchrome Kineidoscope, first projected in the twenties, adumbrating the technique of a new art of kinetic color considered by the artist to be the logically normal sphere in

which nonobjectivity should function. It can also be used to extend temporally by placing the shapes and colors of any kind of modern work in formal and moving order, at the same time translating these shapes and colors into the purity of color-saturated light. The “movement” or rhythm (which is a succedaneum for movement that should exist in all modern pictures) can be made actual by introducing kinesis, whereas now such “movement” or rhythm is more of a symbolic statement than a fact.

1962–64 Because of a heart attack in 1962, found it necessary for several years to paint smaller pictures than usual, such as those in the

*Color of Japan* series and many works depicting Buddhist subjects.

Decided to paint also in Florence, Italy, and now lives there two or three months each year.

1965–66 Illustrated twenty *haiku*, the seventeen-syllable Japanese verse form, in a portfolio of woodblock prints. These illustrations vary from figurative to nonobjective, and are intended as a pictorial completion of the verses. Although the form of *haiku* remains modern, Macdonald-Wright believes illustrations done in earlier periods have seldom risen above the level of an academic sketch.



*Dimensions are in inches, height preceding width. Oil paintings are on canvas unless otherwise noted. Works reproduced are marked \*, and † when in color.*

# catalogue of the exhibition

1. Los Angeles Landscape, 1903  
oil on panel, 16 × 8  
Lent by the artist
- \*2. Portrait Head of Jean Dracopoli, 1912  
oil on panel, 16¼ × 13½  
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Roy R. Neuberger
3. Still Life with Skull, 1912  
oil, 27½ × 23¼  
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. William Lincer
- †4. Abstraction on Spectrum (Organization, 5), 1914  
oil, 30 × 24  
Lent by the Des Moines Art Center,  
Nathan Emory Coffin Collection



*Conception Synchrony, 1915*

5. Conception, 1914  
oil on canvas, mounted on panel,  $30 \times 12$   
Lent by Mrs. Lydia Winston Malbin

6. Conception, 1914  
oil on linen,  $36 \times 30$   
Lent by the Joseph H. Hirshhorn Collection

- \*7. Conception Synchrony, 1915  
oil,  $30 \times 24$   
Lent by the Whitney Museum of  
American Art, Gift of George F. Of

8. Self Portrait, 1915  
oil,  $29\frac{1}{2} \times 23\frac{1}{2}$   
Lent by Moritz Jagendorf



*Portrait Head of Jean Dracopoli, 1912*

- \*9. California Landscape, 1916  
oil,  $30 \times 22\frac{1}{2}$   
Lent by The Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts,  
Ferdinand Howald Collection

- \*10. Synchrony in Green and Orange, 1916  
oil,  $34\frac{1}{2} \times 30\frac{1}{2}$   
Lent by the Walker Art Center

- \*11. Still Life No. 2, 1917  
watercolor on pasteboard,  $12\frac{1}{2} \times 15\frac{3}{8}$   
Lent by The Columbus Gallery of  
Fine Arts,  
Ferdinand Howald Collection

12. Still Life Synchrony, 1917  
oil,  $22 \times 30$   
Lent by Joseph H. Hazen

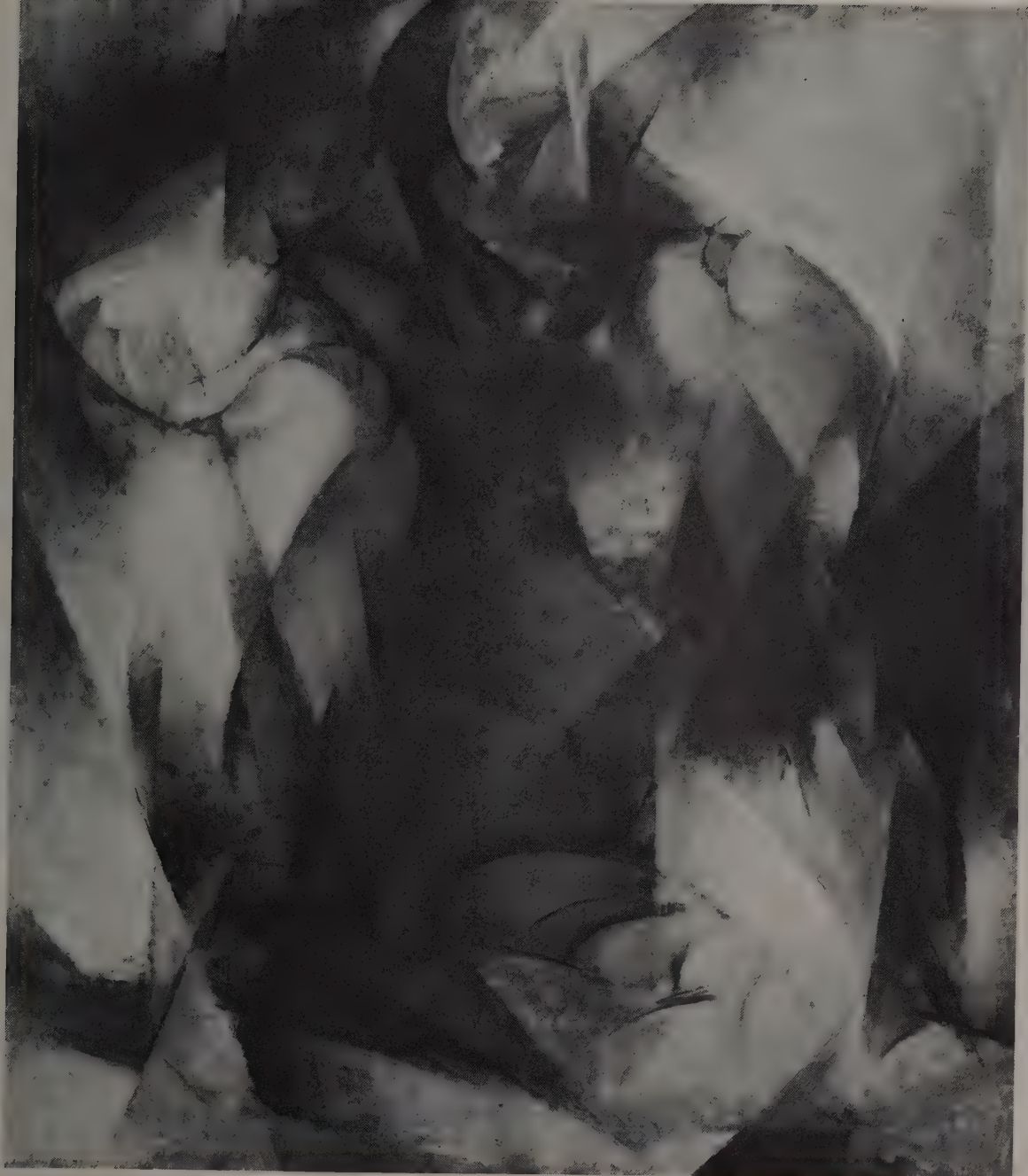
- †13. Synchrony, 1917  
oil,  $31 \times 24$   
Lent by The Museum of Modern Art

14. Santa Monica Canyon, 1917  
watercolor,  $20 \times 15$   
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Allen



*California Landscape, 1916*





*Synchrony in Green and Orange, 1916*





*Oriental Synchrony in Blue-Green, 1918*

15. California Landscape, 1918  
watercolor,  $20\frac{1}{2} \times 17\frac{1}{2}$   
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Lorser Feitelson

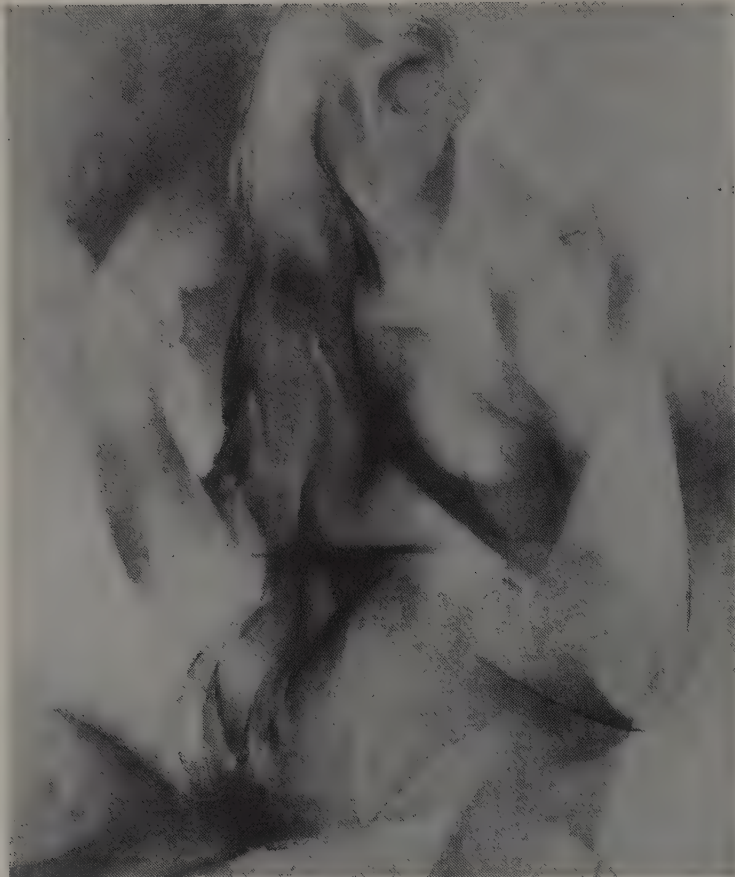
- \*16. Oriental Synchrony in Blue-Green, 1918  
oil,  $36 \times 50$   
Lent by the Whitney Museum of  
American Art



*Still Life No. 2, 1917*

17. Portrait of S. S. Van Dine, 1918  
oil,  $38 \times 33$   
Lent by Miss Marguerite Beatrice Child

18. Sunrise Synchrony in Violet, 1918  
oil,  $35\frac{3}{4} \times 54\frac{1}{4}$   
Lent by the Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute



*Synchrony in Purple Minor, 1919*

19. *Synchrony in Blue*, 1918  
oil,  $35\frac{1}{2} \times 20$   
Lent by the Sidney Janis Collection

- \*20. *Synchrony in Purple Minor*, 1919  
oil,  $24 \times 20$   
Lent by The Knoedler Galleries

21. *Trumpet Flowers*, 1919  
oil,  $18 \times 13$   
Lent by the Sidney Janis Sons Gallery

- †22. *American Synchrony No. 1 Green*,  
ca. 1919  
oil,  $35 \times 23$   
Lent anonymously



*Far Country—Synchromy, 1920*



\*23. Far Country—Synchromy, 1920

oil,  $32 \times 25\frac{3}{4}$

Lent by The Detroit Institute of Arts

24. Still Life (Cyclamen and Fruit), 1920

oil,  $22 \times 18$

Lent anonymously

\*25. Canyon Synchromy, ca. 1920

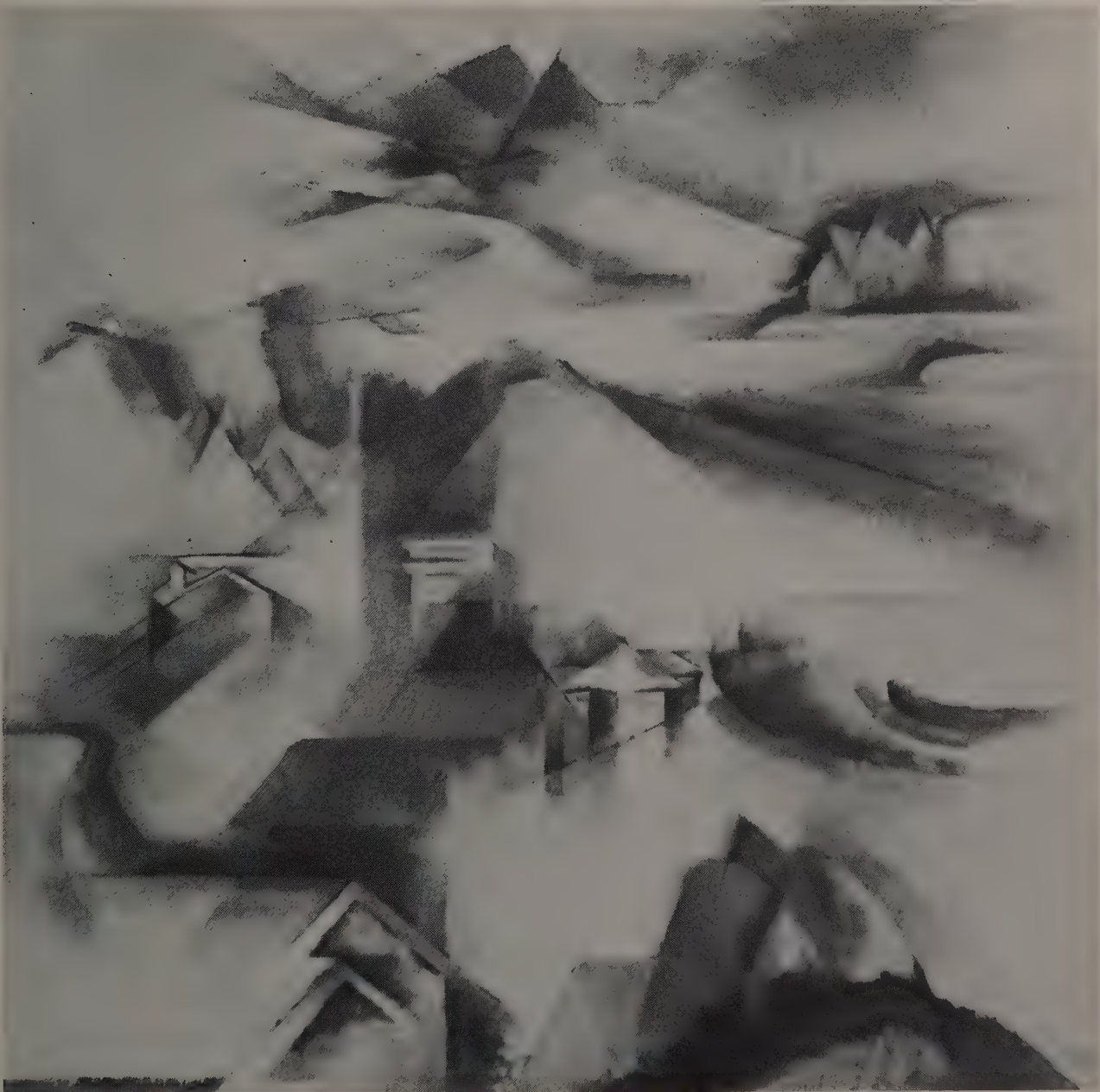
oil,  $24\frac{1}{8} \times 24\frac{1}{8}$

Lent by the University of Minnesota Gallery,  
Courtesy Ione and Hudson Walker

26. Santa Monica Canyon, ca. 1920

oil,  $20 \times 24$

Lent by the National Collection of Fine Arts,  
Smithsonian Institution



*Canyon Synchrony, ca. 1920*



*American Synchrony No. 1 Green, ca. 1919*

27. American Synchrony, 1921  
oil,  $32\frac{1}{2} \times 28\frac{1}{2}$   
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Boone

28. Yin Synchrony, California, 1925  
oil,  $24 \times 30$   
Lent by the artist

29. Dragon Forms, 1926  
oil on panel,  $26 \times 15\frac{1}{4}$   
Lent by the Rose Fried Gallery

30. Figure, 1927  
pencil,  $18 \times 12$   
Lent by the artist



31. Self Portrait, 1926-27  
oil, 28 × 24  
Lent by the Grand Rapids Art Museum

32. Self Portrait, 1928 (?)  
oil, 36 × 30  
Lent by the artist

33. Old Fisherman (Fisherman Synchrony),  
1928  
oil, 40 × 38½  
Lent by the artist

34. Figure, 1929  
pencil, 18 × 12  
Lent by the artist

35. Japanese Fruit: Still Life Synchrony, 1929  
oil, 28½ × 28½  
Lent by Mrs. Henry Mayers

\*36. Yin Synchrony No. 3, 1930  
oil, 33 × 39½  
Lent by the Santa Barbara Museum of Art

37. Trees, ca. 1930  
pastel, 20 × 15  
Lent by Mrs. Henry Mayers

38. Lao Tzu and Yin Hi (Ancient Heroes No. 4),  
1930-31  
oil, 92¼ × 66  
Lent by the artist



*Yin Synchrony No. 3, 1930*

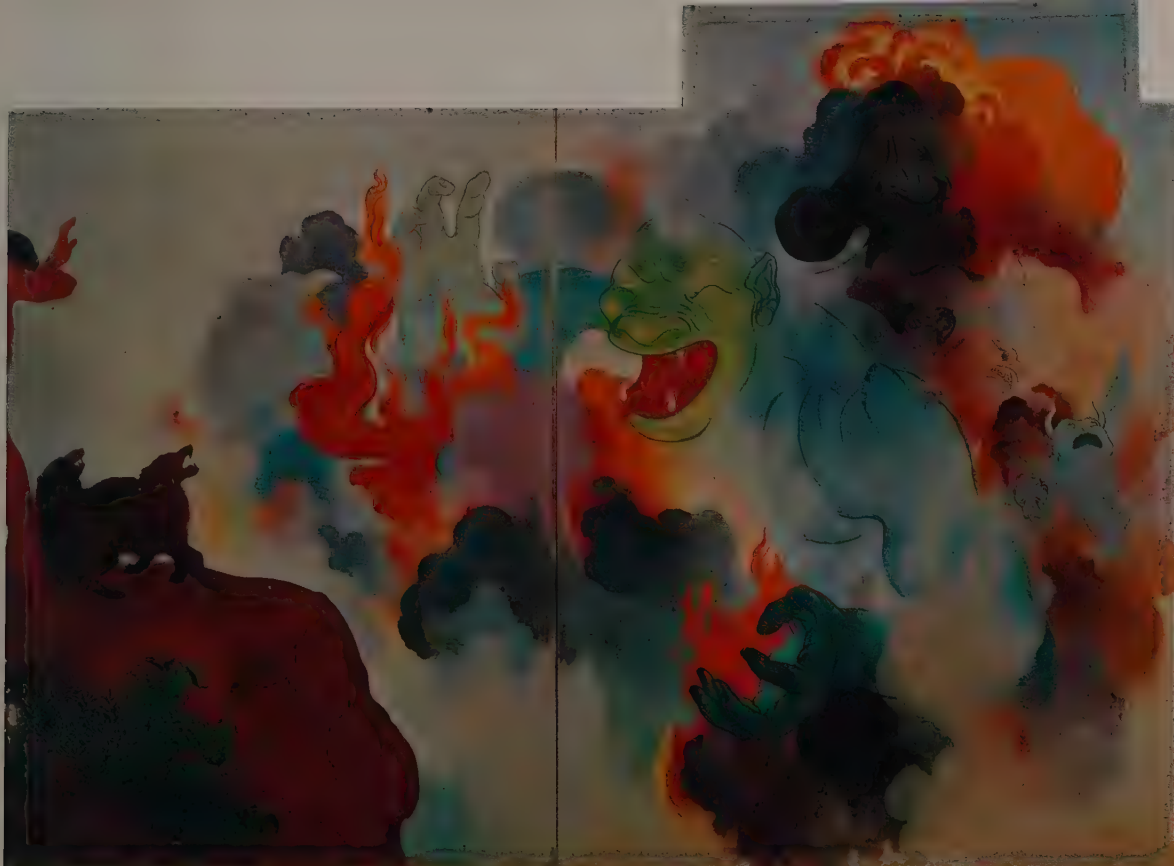


39. Santa Monica Library mural, 1935  
oil on panel, 72 high and 120 high

SECTIONS EXHIBITED:

†Prologue, primitive man  
Roger Bacon, Copernicus, and Galileo  
Royal Mosque at Isfahan  
A dancer; a group of musicians  
Edgar Allan Poe  
Lee H. De Forest

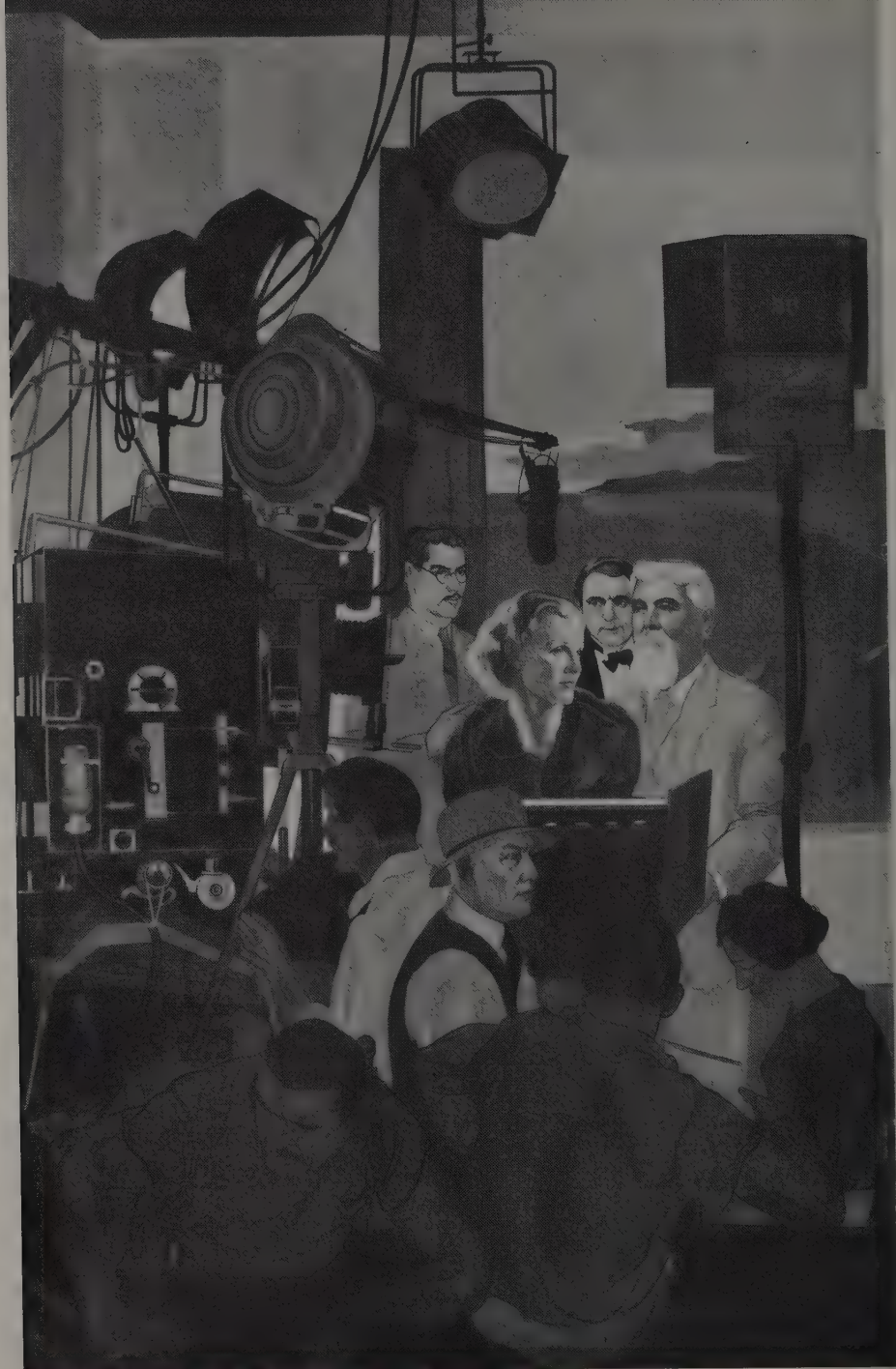
\*A motion picture studio  
A construction worker



*Prologue, primitive man, 1935*

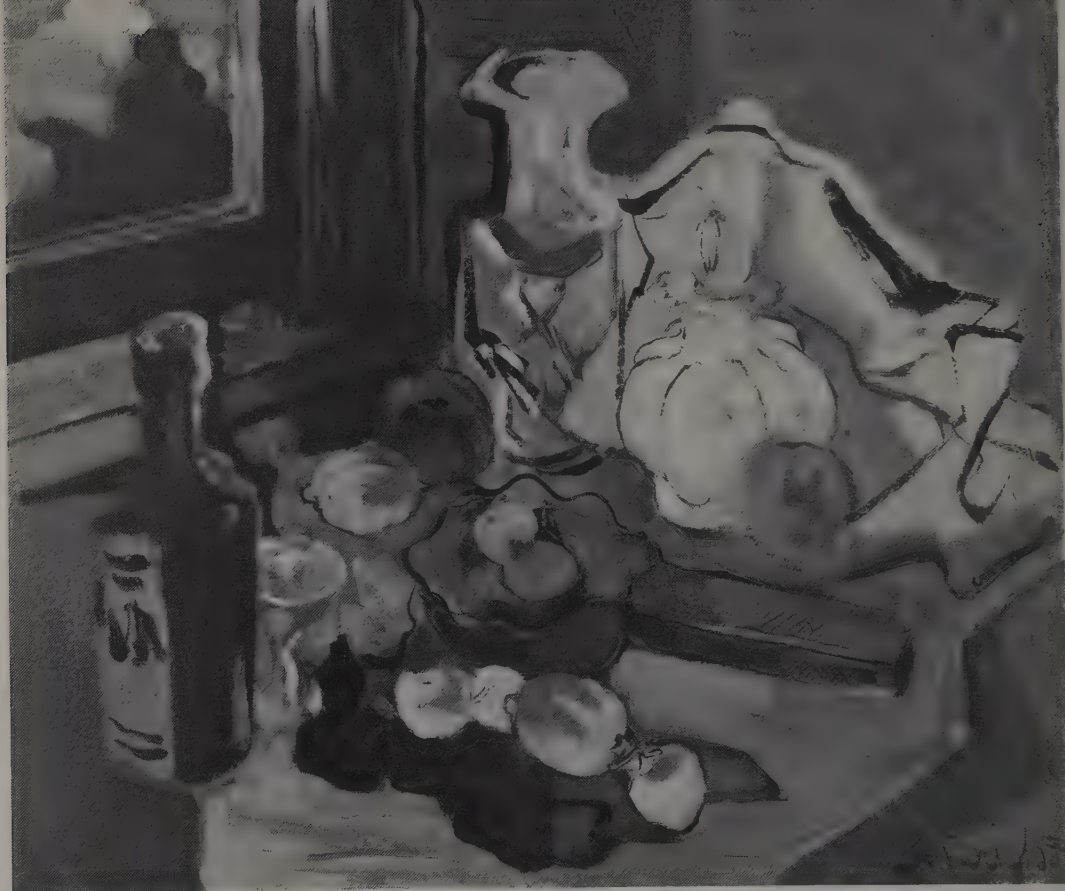
*The mural is on the theme of two paths of man's development, the technical and the imaginative. Their fusion in the motion picture as an art form is the concluding scene. The mural was executed for the California library under the W.P.A. program; the entire work is now in the collection of the National Collection of Fine Arts, Smithsonian Institution.*





*A motion picture studio, 1935*

40. Still Life #1, 1938  
oil, 17 × 24  
Lent by Thomas H. Benton
41. Laborers, ca. 1930–40      *Wright's only work in the medium of lithography;  
signed with a Spanish pseudonym, "Delimpalisada."*  
Lithograph, 16 × 10½  
Lent by the artist
- \*42. Still Life with Cut-Glass Decanter, 1941  
oil, 20 × 24  
Lent by the artist
43. Three Nudes, 1942  
watercolor, 36 × 29  
Lent by A. H. Sutton



*Still Life with Cut-Glass Decanter, 1941*

44. Summer, 1943  
oil, 25 × 30  
Lent by the artist

- \*46. Still Life, Oxblood Vase, 1945  
oil, 36 × 30  
Lent by the Rose Fried Gallery

- †45. Hoofers, 1944  
oil, 30 × 36  
Lent by Dr. and Mrs. A. T. Jagendorf

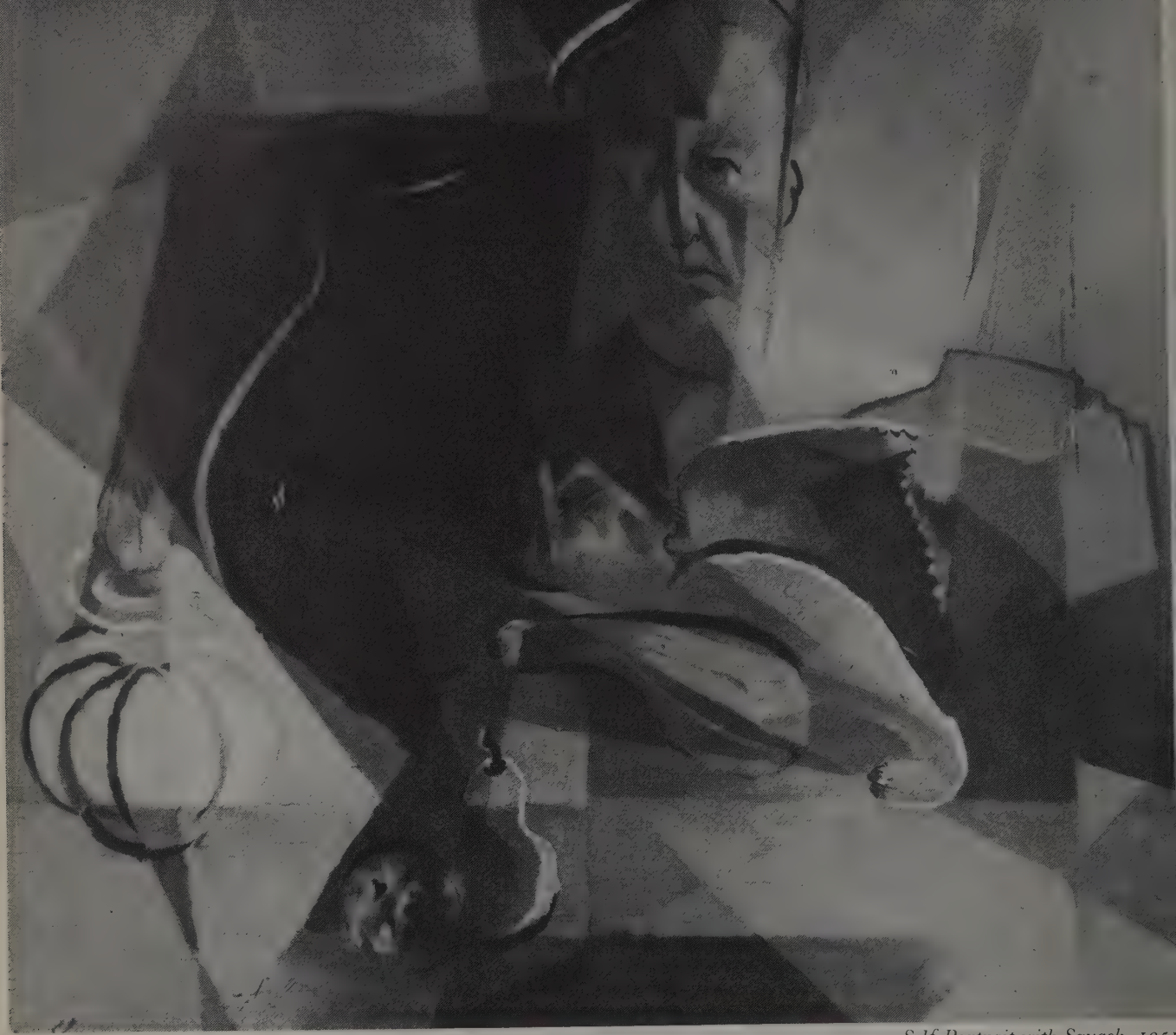
47. Rakan, 1946  
oil, 40 × 30  
Lent by the artist





Still Life, Oxblood Vase, 1945





*Self Portrait with Squash, 1951*

48. Still Life with Abalone Shell, 1946  
oil,  $15\frac{3}{4} \times 27$   
Lent by the artist
49. Two Women Bathing, 1946  
oil on panel,  $49 \times 22$   
Lent by the artist
50. Fiat (Teaching Buddha), 1950  
oil,  $36 \times 25$   
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Allen
- \*51. Self Portrait with Squash, 1951  
oil on panel,  $24\frac{3}{4} \times 30\frac{1}{4}$   
Lent by the artist



*Landscape, 1952*

- \*52. Landscape, 1952  
watercolor and pencil,  $20\frac{1}{2} \times 25$   
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Paul Blanchard

53. Landscape, 1952  
pencil,  $22 \times 30$   
Lent by the artist

54. Upheaval, 1952  
watercolor,  $19 \times 26\frac{1}{2}$   
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Lorser Feitelson

- \*55. Homage to Debussy, 1952  
oil,  $96 \times 59\frac{1}{2}$   
Lent by the Rose Fried Gallery





56. Saddle Peak Road, 1953  
pencil, 46 × 29  
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Allen

\*57. Stippled Watercolor, 1954  
watercolor on paper board, 39 × 25½  
Lent by the Rose Fried Gallery

58. Chant de Victoire, 1955  
oil, 60 × 36  
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Lorser Feitelson

59. Flight of the Butterfly, 1955  
oil, 30 × 40  
Lent by the artist

60. Liaison Intime, 1955  
oil, 40 × 30  
Lent by the Rose Fried Gallery

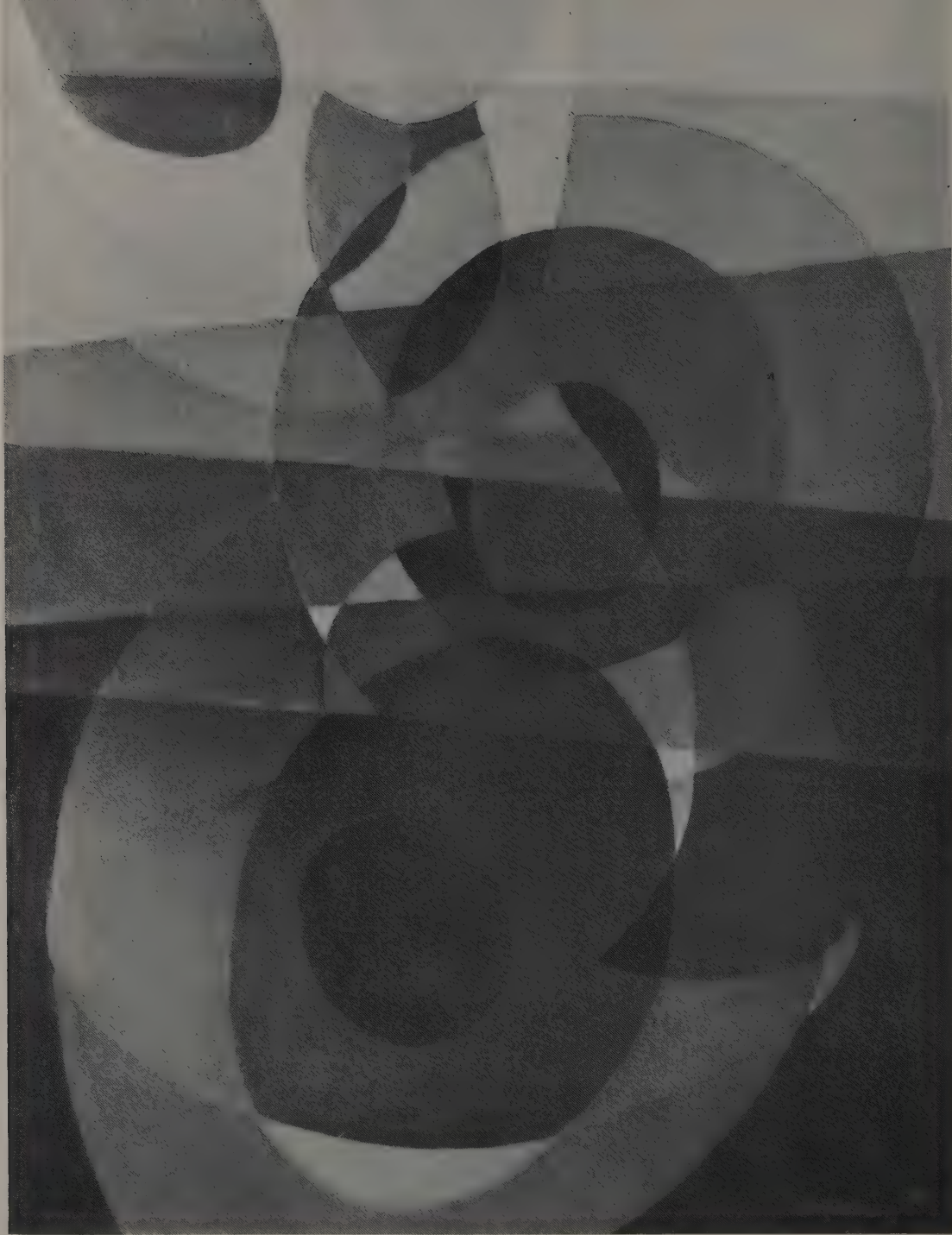
61. Paravent Japonnais, 1955  
oil, 24 × 72  
Lent by the artist

†62. Raigo, 1955  
oil, 71 × 76¼  
Lent by the Rose Fried Gallery

63. Russian Dance, 1955  
oil, 60 × 44  
Lent by the Rose Fried Gallery



*Stippled Watercolor, 1954*



64. Contemplation, 1956  
conte crayon on paper, 26 × 40  
Lent by the Rose Fried Gallery

\*65. Sleep, 1956  
oil, 40 × 30  
Lent by the artist

66. Topango Cañon, 1956  
pencil, 23 × 29  
Lent by the artist

67. Frustration, 1957  
oil, 24 × 20  
Lent by the Rose Fried Gallery





*Psyche # 2: Sensation, 1957*

68. Sketch for "Lutist," 1957

pencil, 8½ × 11

Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Allen

†69. Lutist, 1957

oil, 48 × 36

Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Allen

70. Mechanical Flight # 2, 1957

oil, 36 × 20

Lent by the artist

\*71. Psyche # 2: Sensation, 1957

oil on panel, 22 × 14

Lent by the Rose Fried Gallery



72. Souvenir, 1957  
watercolor,  $38\frac{1}{2} \times 26$   
Lent by the Henri Gallery

73. Manifestation, 1956–58  
oil,  $48 \times 36$   
Lent by the Rose Fried Gallery

74. Chamber Music, 1958  
oil,  $27\frac{1}{2} \times 55$   
Lent by the Rose Fried Gallery

75. Electricity, 1958  
oil,  $36 \times 25$   
Lent by the Rose Fried Gallery

\*76. La Gaieté, 1958  
oil,  $50 \times 36$   
Lent by the Rose Fried Gallery

77. Persian Dance, 1959  
oil,  $36 \times 19$   
Lent by the artist

78. Self Portrait, 1960  
pencil,  $15 \times 12$   
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Allen

79. Fish, 1961  
oil,  $16 \times 36$   
Lent by the artist







*Embarkation, 1962*

†80. Embarkation, 1962  
oil on panel,  $48\frac{1}{4} \times 36\frac{1}{8}$   
Lent by The Museum of Modern Art,  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Nelson Pharr

81. Jazz Fragment, 1962  
oil on panel,  $24 \times 20$   
Lent by the Rose Fried Gallery

82. L'Arrivé, 1962  
oil on panel,  $24 \times 20$   
Lent by the Rose Fried Gallery

83. Medieval Bride (*omaggio a Piero della  
Francesca*), 1962  
oil on panel,  $24 \times 19\frac{3}{4}$   
Lent by the artist

84. Autumn Wind (*Aki no kaze*), 1963  
oil on panel,  $24 \times 20$   
Lent by the Rose Fried Gallery

85. Danse Orientale, 1963  
oil,  $32 \times 20$   
Lent by the Rose Fried Gallery

86. Miyako Odori, Kyoto, 1963  
oil on panel,  $32 \times 29$   
Lent by A. H. Sutton

87. Flying Fudo, 1961–64  
oil,  $70 \times 48$   
Lent by the Rose Fried Gallery



*Introspection, 1963-64*

\*88. Introspection, 1963-64

oil, 60 × 35

Lent by the Rose Fried Gallery

89. Zobana, 1963-64

oil, 24 × 40

Lent by the artist

90. Kyotaki, 1964

watercolor and pencil, 24 × 16

Lent by the artist

91. Question—Solution, 1964

oil on panels, four panels, each 24 × 20

Lent by the artist



*Fête de Nuit, # 2, 1965*



92. Flight of the Dolphin, 1959-65

oil, 46 x 41

Lent by the artist

93. Young Storm Dragon, 1961-65

oil on panel, 30 x 24

Lent by the artist

\*94. Fête de Nuit, #2, 1965

oil on panel, 20 x 24

Lent by the Rose Fried Gallery

95. Prometheus, 1965

oil on panel, 95 x 48

Lent by the artist

96. Haiga folio, 1965-66

color woodblock, average: 20 x 16

Lent by the artist

*A set of 20 prints illustrating haiku by Basho, Buson, Issa, Shiki, Chiyoni, and Hokushi. Haiku is the Japanese verse form in which the poem is composed in 17 syllables, patterned in segments of 5, 7, and 5.*

97. Tsuyu no yo nagara, 1966

oil on panel, 40 x 30

Lent by the artist

98. L'Age d'Or, 1966-67

oil on panel, 96 x 144

Lent by the artist

## selected bibliography

### GENERAL REFERENCE WORKS

- Barr, Alfred. *Cubism and Abstract Art*. New York, The Museum of Modern Art, 1936, p. 74.
- Baur, John I. H. *Revolution and Tradition in Modern American Art*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1951, pp. 47, 50-52, 57, 66, 125, 126.
- Baur, John I. H. et al., *New Art in America*. Greenwich, Connecticut, New York Graphic Society, 1957, pp. 84-87.
- Birren, Faber. *History of Color in Painting*. New York, Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1965.
- Bittermann, Eleanor. *Art in Modern Architecture*. New York, Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1952.
- Blesh, Rudi. *Modern Art USA*. New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1956, pp. 25, 64, 69, 87-89, 90, 127.
- Brown, Milton. *American Painting from the Armory Show to the Depression*. Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1955, pp. 64-65.
- Cheney, Martha Candler. *Modern Art in America*. New York, Whittlesey House, 1939, pp. 53, 61-63.
- Cheney, Sheldon. *Primer of Modern Art*. New York, Tudor Publishing Company, 1945, pp. 82, 149-154, 187, 242.
- Chevreul, Michel Eugène. *De La Loi du Contraste Simultané des Couleurs*. Paris, Pitois-Levrault, 1839.
- Coquiott, Gustave. *Cubistes, Futuristes et Passéistes*. Paris, Librairie Ollendorf, 1914, pp. 177-187.
- Craven, Thomas. *Modern Art*. London, Williams and Norgate, Ltd., 1935, p. 251.
- Dreier, Katherine S. *Western Art and the New Era*. New York, Brentano, 1923.
- Geldzahler, Henry. *American Painting in the Twentieth Century*. Greenwich, Connecticut, New York Graphic Society (through the Metropolitan Museum of Art), 1965, pp. 51, 67, 72-73.

- Goodrich, Lloyd, and Baur, John I. H. *American Art of Our Century*. New York, Frederick A. Praeger, 1961, p. 42.
- Haftmann, Werner. *Painting in the Twentieth Century*. London, Percy Lund, Humphries and Company, Ltd., 1960, vol. 1, pp. 163, 293, 398.
- Hess, Thomas. *Abstract Painting*. New York, Viking Press, 1951, p. 84.
- Janis, Sidney. *Abstract and Surrealist Art in America*. New York, Reynal and Hitchcock, 1944, pp. 5, 31, 32, 39.
- Langer, Susanne. *Philosophy in a New Key*. New York, Rinehart and Company, Inc., 1949.
- Larkin, Oliver W. *Art and Life in America*. New York, Rinehart and Company, Inc., 1941, pp. 356, 366, 367, 374.
- Melquist, Jerome. *The Emergence of an American Art*. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942.
- Raynal, Maurice. *Modern Painting*. Geneva, Albert Skira, 1960, p. 138.
- Read, Herbert. *Art and Society*. New York, Pantheon, 1945.
- Richardson, Edgar P. *Painting in America*. New York, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1956, p. 372.
- Ritchie, Andrew C. *Abstract Painting and Sculpture in America*. New York, Museum of Modern Art, 1951, pp. 29ff, 153.
- Rood, Ogden. *Modern Chromatics*. New York, D. Appleton & Co., 1879.
- Seuphor, Michel. *Dictionnaire de la Peinture Abstraite*. Paris, Fernand Hazan, 1957, pp. 21, 23, 85, 106, 107, 113, 213.
- . *L'Art Abstrait: Ses Origines, Ses Premiers Maîtres*. Paris, Galerie Maeght, 1949, pp. 155-157, 301.
- . "Synchromies." *L'Oeil*, Janvier 1958, pp. 57-61.
- Sutter, David. "Les Phénomènes de la Vision." *L'Art*, vol. 20 (1880).
- Washburn, G. B. "New American Paintings Acquired." *Carnegie Magazine*, vol. 30 (June 1956), pp. 193-197.
- "West Coast Pioneer." *Time*, vol. 67 (March 5, 1956), p. 58.
- Wright, Stanton Macdonald. *Approaches to Oriental and Occidental Art*, Honolulu, University of Hawaii, 1951.
- . "The Artist Speaks. With a Note on Synchromism by Barbara Rose." *Art in America*, vol. 55 (May 1967), p. 70.
- . "Bigaku No Kanata Ni." Japan, Bijutsu Hiho, 1955 (extract from *Beyond Aesthetics* written with W. H. Wright).
- . "Blueprint for a Textbook on Art." *College Art Journal*, vol. 4 (March 1945), pp. 144-148. Reply by J. H. Breasted, Jr., vol. 5 (January 1946), pp. 85-92.
- . "Considerations." *Art Actuel International*, vol. 3 (1958).
- . "Preamble to a Preamble for a Definitive History of Modern Art." *Art Voices*, Spring 1966, p. 30.
- . "Some Aspects of Sung Painting." *Magazine of Art*, vol. 42 (October 1949), pp. 221-226.
- . *A Treatise on Color*. Los Angeles, 1924. (Reprinted in this catalogue.)
- Wright, Willard Huntington. "Impressionism to Synchromism." *Forum*, vol. 50 (December 1913), pp. 757-770.
- . *Modern Art, Its Tendency and Meaning*. New York, John Lane Company, 1915.
- . "Synchromism." *International Studio*, vol. 56 (October 1915), xcvi-c.
- Wright, Willard Huntington, and Wright, Stanton Macdonald. *The Creative Will: Studies in the Philosophy and Syntax of Aesthetics*. New York, John Lane Company, 1916.
- . *The Future of Painting*. New York, B. W. Huebsch, Inc., 1923.
- "Wright's Huge Mural, 200 Figures, is in Place in the Santa Monica Library, California." *Art Digest*, vol. 10 (October 1, 1935), p. 7.

#### CATALOGUES

- Agee, William C. *Synchromism and Related Color Principles in American Painting, 1910-1930*. New York, M. Knoedler & Company, Inc., 1965.

- Agee, William C. *Synchromism and Related Color Principles in American Painting, 1910-1930*. New York, Museum of Modern Art (Traveling Exhibitions), 1967.
- Brown, Richard F. *A Retrospective Showing of the Work of Stanton Macdonald-Wright*. Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Museum, 1956.
- Exhibition of Stanton Macdonald-Wright and Morgan Russell. Munich, Neue Kunstsalon, June, 1913.
- The Forum Exhibition of Modern American Painters*. New York, Anderson Galleries, March 13-25, 1916.
- Goodrich, Lloyd. *Pioneers of Modern Art in America*. New York, The Whitney Museum of American Art, 1946.
- Les Synchromistes: Morgan Russell et Stanton Macdonald-Wright*. Paris, Galerie Bernheim-Jeune, October 27-November 8, 1913.
- Morgan Russell Memorial Exhibition*. New York, Rose Fried Gallery, October-November 1953.
- Seuphor, Michel. "Art et Science." Rome, Civiltà delle Macchine, Revista Binestrade di Cultura Contemporanea, January-February 1964.
- Seven Decades of Modern Art*. New York, Public Education Association, 1966.
- Three American Pioneers: Morgan Russell, Macdonald-Wright, and Patrick Bruce*. New York, Rose Fried Gallery, 1950.
- Vigtel, Gudmund. *The New Traditions: Modern Americans Before 1940*. Washington, D.C., Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1963.

#### ARTICLES

- Agee, William C. "Synchromism, the First American Movement." *Art News*, vol. 64 (October 1965), p. 30.
- "Art News from Los Angeles." *Art News*, vol. 54 (October 1955), p. 8.
- George, Waldemar. "Trent Ans de l'Art Independent." Paris, *L'Amour de L'Art*, 1926.

- "Knowing Brush." *Art Digest*, vol. 18 (November 15, 1943), p. 7.
- Perkins, C. M. "Los Angeles: The Way You Look At It." *Art in America*, vol. 54 (March 1966), p. 113.
- Perkins, C. M. "Fact or Fiction? The Legacy of Oriental Art." *Art in America*, vol. 53 (February 1965), p. 46.

#### SELECTED EXHIBITION REVIEWS

- Exhibition at Knoedler Gallery, 1965:  
*Arts*, vol. 40 (December 1965), p. 48.
- Exhibition at Rose Fried Gallery, 1965:  
*Art News*, vol. 64 (March 1965), p. 14.  
*Arts Magazine*, vol. 30 (March 1965), p. 60.  
*New York Times*, February 21, 1965.  
*New York Post*, March 14, 1965.
- Exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum, 1956:  
*Art News*, vol. 54 (January 1956) p. 18.
- Exhibition at the Duveen-Graham Gallery 1956:  
*Arts*, vol. 31 (October 1956), pp. 52-53.  
*Art News*, vol. 56 (October 1956), p. 6.
- Exhibition at the Galerie Arnaud, Paris, 1956:  
*Burlington Magazine*, vol. 98 (January 1956), p. 214.
- Exhibition at Rose Fried Gallery, 1950:  
*Art Digest*, vol. 25 (December 1, 1950), p. 14.  
*Art News*, vol. 49 (December 1950), p. 47.
- Exhibitions at Stendahl Gallery, 1948, 1943, 1942:  
"Wright Writes." *Art Digest*, vol. 19 (April 15, 1945), p. 13.  
*Arts and Architecture*, vol. 60 (December 1943), p. 10.  
*Art Digest*, vol. 16 (May 1, 1942), p. 17.  
*California Arts and Architecture*, vol. 59 (May 1942), p. 9.
- Forum Exhibition at the Anderson Galleries, 1916:  
Wright, Willard Huntington. "Forum Exhibition at the Anderson Galleries." *Forum*, vol. 55 (April, 1916), pp. 457-471.
- Exhibition at the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune, 1913:  
Kahn, Gustave. *Mercure de France*.  
November 11, 1913, pp. 426-428.  
de Vaugironne, V. *La Revue Moderne*, no. 22 (November 25, 1913), pp. 12-14.

*a treatise on*  
**COLOR**

♦

*S. Macdonald Wright*

*Copyright MCMXXIV - S. Macdonald Wright*  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA





---

## INTRODUCTION

The necessity for the use of color in its various phases has only been felt by artists since 1800. The intensity of modern life has made a greater intensity necessary in art. Only by being more intense than life can art hold its own as a vital factor in either taste or inspiration. With the Greeks, life moved slowly and more time was given to introspection, hence Greek art, produced under these conditions, was calm, idealized, philosophical. At the time of Delacroix, mens' minds, turning more to the analysis of detail-data (whereas the Greeks thought only in terms of principles), the study of the effects of light began. By this study they concluded that tone was secondary to color and they no longer copied the tone value of planes. **Sunlight, to them, was yellow.** This was the first step in naturalistic painting. In looking intently at a yellow spot on a white surface, they noted that the eye called up violet as an "aura" or ring around this yellow, and from this observation they concluded that shadow, being the absence of light (yellow), was necessarily violet. From these simple observations Impressionism arose. Delacroix, before them, looking intently at a red cloak, had seen a fleeting greenness in its shadows, and by the application of this observation was enabled to achieve a greater scintillation of color effect in his work. Thus the principle of color complementaries became an accepted fact to painters. Even before this, Constable and Turner, in looking at a blue sky or a green meadow had seen that the blue and the green were not flat planes, but were planes made up of many blues and many greens. By following Nature's method and breaking their planes into minute parts they produced on their canvases an approximation to this natural scintillation. This principle of the multiplicity of various applied colors to produce the effect on the spectator of a unity of color-plane which was ostensibly more vibrant than the flat plane, added to the observation that the sunlight is yellow and that shadow is violet, was the **raison d'être** for the Impressionists' complete preoccupation with light effects. Renoir noted that a person coming down an alley of trees, through which the sunlight poured in spots, gave him the impression of a lack of solidity, because as the flecks of sun struck the solid body, those parts would appear solid and on a different or advancing plane from the parts remaining in shadow. This breaking of the solid plane produced the illusion of dis-

---

integration. He reasoned rightly that if yellow (sunlight) gave solidity, and violet (shadow) took away from solidity, he could utilize this principle of concreteness (yellow) and discreteness (violet), to make the parts of his paintings that he wanted solid, solid; and those he wanted hollow and receding, hollow and receding. This marked a great step in advance; the third, since artists had begun to handle color as an element more important than mere decoration. The fourth step was taken by Morgan Russell and, as will be seen, was an extension of the Impressionists' discoveries. He argued that as yellow is the highest light in the color scale, and violet the deepest shadow, the intermediate colors must be considered as approaches to yellow (light), or violet (shadow.) Thus, in painting a round object the highest light he made yellow; as the light decreased on the object toward shadow he expressed it as chromatic steps downward toward violet through the greens and blues. On the other side of the round object he graded toward violet through oranges and reds. The effect was highly vibrant and gave one the impression of seeing nature through a prismatic glass. The fifth step was taken by myself and was an extension of the observation of Renoir. I argued that as nature recedes from the eye it becomes blue-violet or violet, while as it advances it becomes warmer, or, in other words, more yellow or more orange. Thus in the middle distance, or that space lying behind the first plane, there must exist all the intermediate steps of the spectrum. The sixth step, that of harmonization of color, is less known and much talked of and it is with this phase of color that we shall deal in fuller detail; not that it is more necessary as an art attribute than the other phases, but because while an artist may depend upon his own taste and abilities for attaining the vision he pursues, he must use color to express it, and the first requisite of color, as the first requisite of music, is that it be harmonious and not, by its misapplication, repel the spectator before he has had time to see the profounder qualities that may lie underneath.

## COLOR

For the artist there is little need of going into scientific explanation and terminology to describe what causes our color perception, and what color itself is. We all have a definite idea of what color is; and must dis-

---

count as extraneous and erroneous those definitions of the word "color" used to describe a quality in music, a richness of effect in black and white or the dramatic atmosphere of a story. Color, we may say, invests and interpenetrates all of the objective world in which we live; thus absolute gray is a hypothetical condition; white is relative only, becoming black under the conditions of a projected light, and black itself only an ideal and unattainable condition, where there is absolutely no reflection. Gray is used here to designate a condition of colorlessness. To make white into black, a light is thrown on a white screen; the part of the white left in shadow then taking the part of blackness. No light that we can project is absolutely white; even if it were, we can, through a prism, break it up into all the colors that we, as human beings, are capable of reacting to. Theorists to the contrary, there are no primary colors; there are no secondary colors; there are only simultaneous colors. But to relate the color spectrum to the pigmental palette from which we can take three colors and make all the rest, we name those three colors "primary" for the sake of convenience and because we cannot make all the other colors from any other three. "Primary" then, is only applied by the worker in pigments to those colors from which the rest can be mixed; these three not being reducible to a simpler or more primary number or elements. These colors are red, yellow and blue. Red is a color having, for the eye, neither yellow nor blue as an admixture. Yellow has, for the eye, neither red nor blue, and blue has, for the eye, neither red nor yellow. Yellow is approximately obtained in what is called "light yellow cadmium." (Blockx colors.) Blue is approximately obtained by a mixture of a good cerulean blue with a small amount of cobalt. Red is almost pure as a "dark madder Lake." (Blockx). These colors that we shall henceforth call "primary" colors, when mixed together in like saturations produce the secondary colors, viz. yellow and red equal orange; red and blue equal violet; yellow and blue equal green. When a greater quantity of one primary color is mixed with a smaller quantity of another primary color, the result is a tertiary color. Thus if we may consider that the color yellow is made up of four-fourths of yellow and that red and blue follow the same description, then three-fourths of yellow, mixed with one-fourth of red equals yellow-orange; three-fourths yellow with one-fourth blue equals yel-



---

low-green; three-fourths blue with one-fourth yellow equals blue-green; three-fourths blue with one-fourth red equals blue-violet; three-fourths red with one-fourth blue equals red-violet. It may be objected that one color being stronger than another, these arbitrary proportions do not hold good, but the proportions here mean, not a given **quantity**, but a given **quality** of influence, and are based on the position of the secondary color rather than on the method used to place the secondary where it is. Thus orange should stand half way between yellow and red; in other words, be a color whose influence is felt as much through yellow as through red; a color which has an equal part of red and yellow, half or two quarters of each. The result of the foregoing admixtures is twelve colors, the three primaries standing (Plate 1) equi-distant apart; the secondaries standing equi-distant between the primaries and hence equi-distant from each other, and the tertiaries standing each side, or between each primary and secondary. These last are six in number. (On plate 1 the primaries are numbered 1, the secondaries 2, and the tertiaries 3.) It will be noted that directly opposite each primary color stands a secondary color and these pairs of colors are complementaries. When mixed together they should produce neutral, or colorless gray. Indeed the gray resulting from the admixture of each set of complementaries should be like the grays resulting from every other set. This is the absolute proof of the correct position of the two colors and is the only proof possible. A small variation of "warmness" or "coldness" in the resultant gray indicates that the combination is unbalanced. This may be rectified by adding warmth if the gray is cold and coldness if too warm. If in mixing red and green together the gray is cold or blueish or has a tinge of violet, it indicates that the red has too much blue quality, or that the green has too much blue or not enough yellow. An addition of the needed color to both or one, rectifies the overbalance on the cold side and nearer approximates the ideal gray condition. Approximation is all one may, with reason, expect; the absolute being unattainable. But the nearer the approach to the ideal, the more "right" the balance.

## COLORED LIGHTS

In the foregoing paragraph the statement was made that there are no primary nor secondary colors; nothing but simultaneous colors. In project-

---

ing colored lights on a screen we can obtain the same results as with pigment mixtures, and furthermore, unlike pigments, we may, with colored lights, make what we have called primary colors when dealing with pigments by mixing two so-called secondaries together. In pigments, if we mix orange and green, the result is a very neutralized brown. In throwing a green light on a screen into an orange light, or vice versa, we produce a pure yellow. With violet and orange, we produce a red, and with green and violet a blue.

## THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE SPECTRUM

Let us now call to mind the twelve colors which comprise our spectrum and visualize them as lying along a piano keyboard. Starting with yellow we proceed toward their enumeration through yellow-green, green, blue-green, blue, blue-violet, violet, red-violet, red, red-orange, orange, yellow-orange and back to yellow. Coming back to our starting place, we see that we have formed a cycle of color; a complete sequence, a circular journey. As these fall naturally into circular form we utilize this phenomenon and study our spectrum thus. This permits us to draw a straight line through the center from any given color and find its complementary. It permits us to construct triangles between equi-distant colors in order to find at a glance the absolute balance of the three elements of our instrument. It will also show us, later on, combinations to avoid, and why we must avoid them. But at present it serves to describe groups of colors, to make us feel, in a general way, color in its entirety, and to conceive our instrument not as an abstract splitting of a ray of white light, but as a workable and intimate filing cabinet for reference and study. Lastly it organizes our spectrum in a way that a drawing or painting of the solar spectrum never could, by taking what would be in the solar spectrum minute bands of color and widening them into broad planes, isolating them arbitrarily and making of each color an absolute fixed note. If we did not in this way isolate every one of our twelve colors, but left them as the spectroscope shows them, all of them would merge by an infinite number of color gradations into their opposites, leaving no fixed color, all colors eternally graduating toward the colors that surround them. These minimal gradations, which the eye is incapable of seeing accurately, we

---

have put aside for the same reason that in the construction of our musical instruments sixteenth-tones and eighth-tones are not used, being too subtle for the ear to catch and retain. Even quarter-tones are too delicate for the ordinary auditor. Thus as it stands we have all the pliability of a musical instrument and with the added phases of color-meanings we have an instrument infinitely richer.

### GENERAL COLOR-MEANING

Yellow, red and blue are neither "hot" nor "cold". They stand as qualities of influence rather than as definite color-meanings. Yellow means light, in this sense red is the strength while blue is the shadow-equality of the spectrum. In adding light (yellow), to strength (red), we produce orange, which will be evident to all as the most brilliant color on our palette. In other words, light, plus strength, equals strong light. Shadow (blue), with strength (red), equals strong shadow or violet. Shadow (blue), plus light (yellow), equals a half tone or normal condition which we know green to be. As green surrounds us from our cradle to our grave and has for countless centuries, we accept green as the natural, normal, non-irritating color, and consequently it moves us less than any other color. In other words, as an emotional stimulus it is the weakest color in the spectrum. Orange (light and strength) is directly opposite blue (shadow). Orange and blue are complementary as colors, and we see also that they are complementary as qualities; strongest light and shadow. The weakness of green is contrasted to its complementary the strength of red. The light of yellow is contrasted to its complementary, strong shadow, and we thus prove that where strong light and absolute shadow meet, there is negation. Several observations can be made from this; namely, that red added to yellow produces "warmth"; that blue added to yellow produces "coldness." Indeed, all that part of the spectrum that is influenced by yellow is considered warm and to be more precise than is usual we should say that where the blue influence cools, the orange influence, instead of the yellow, warms. The yellow only illuminates and the violet only darkens without raising or lowering the "temperatures" an iota.

---

## TONAL LOWERING OF SATURATED COLORS

In spite of the different trade names by which different colors are called, such as henna, apricot, sand, mauve, taupe, electric blue, smoke, steelgray, etc., all can be accurately described and classified as neutralized conditions of one or more of our twelve spectrum colors. Indeed, the browns, umbers, siennas and kindred colors are merely yellows, yellow-oranges, and oranges taken down toward black. The tints, such as sky-blue, rose, magenta, sand, etc., are raised by and toward white. Such colors as will be found on Plate II are examples of dark-toned saturated colors. They have no tincture of the deadening influence to be found in colors weakened by black or white. In other words, they are not colors which one feels to be more tonal than chromatic. A dark-toned, saturated color is one which has been lowered by other and darker colors that lie nearest the lowered color's own color. Thus to darken yellow while still retaining its saturation, one mixes with it first yellow-ochre or gold-ochre. This will lower the yellow but will change its color to yellow-yellow-orange, as gold-ochre is merely a neutralized and lowered yellow-orange. Thus the result will be a yellow slightly more red than we desire. Knowing green to be the complementary of red and that the two produce negation we then mix enough emeraude (viridian) with the color to neutralize or negate the red in it. The result is a darker yellow. To lower it still further Transparent Brown is used and green added to counteract the over-plus of red. To raise yellow to greater whiteness, add white, which cools it, hence blues it. To counteract the blueness or coolness, add the slightest touch of cadmium (medium yellow) in itself slightly yellow-orange, and this orange quality will counteract the blue (or cold) quality first seen. Yellow-green made in its most saturated and brilliant condition by mixing cadmium yellow, light, with viridian, is lowered in tone by first using cadmium yellow, (medium) with viridian, then "yellow-ochre," then "gold-ochre," then "Transparent Brown," then black with "medium cadmium yellow." When we have arrived at the utilization of black we are neutralizing the chromatic value of our colors to the point where the saturation is little felt. Green is lowered in the same manner as yellow-green, always using a greater amount of viridian and a larger amount of the yellow element. To raise to a lighter tonal condition add white to the green at its point of greatest



---

saturation and it will be noted that the green has become colder or more blueish. To counteract this, simply add more yellow. Blue-green, obtained in its purest and most saturated condition by the mixture of viridian and cerulean blue, is lowered in tone by adding cobalt and more viridian; then by adding ultramarine and viridian and finally by a touch of the neutralizing black. To raise this color, add white, and if the result is bluer or greener than the original, add viridian or cerulean to correct. Blue, a mixture of cobalt and cerulean, (with the cobalt only slightly changed by cerulean) is lowered by adding ultramarine (a color slightly reddish, or blue with about a quarter red) and viridian (green) to counteract the red in ultramarine. These two together produce a very low tone of saturated blue, indeed about as low a tone of color as the eye can distinguish. To raise, add white, and follow the same rules laid down for the correction of blue-green. Blue-violet is approximately ultramarine blue, some ultramarine being redder than others. In the state that it comes from the tube, it is practically black to the eye, so we can only raise its tonality. This is done by adding white, and when raised to a very light register a small amount of madder Lake is usually needed; the red inherent to ultramarine being too weak to undergo the inroads of white. Violet being half red and half blue we obtain by mixing the colors nearest it, that there may be no clash of neutralization which invariably produces gray. Hence ultramarine and madder Lake are its components. They are even darker in their mixed saturations than blue-violet, so that all we have to do with this darkest color of the spectrum is to add white and more madder Lake in raising its tonality. Red-violet, or purple, is made by mixing the same colors that produce violet, the madder Lake being in the ascendency. Another way is by mixing ultramarine with cobalt violet, a beautiful red-red-violet, and one purported to be permanent. Either of these mixtures is raised with white and in the first case, with madder Lake, in the second with cobalt violet. Pure red is also extremely dark in its inherent saturation, but to make it darker it is necessary to glaze over already dried madder Lake (red) with further coats of itself. To raise this color the student will meet with some difficulties at first for with every addition of white the madder becomes colder or bluer (always traveling toward red-violet). To warm the middle tones of red we add scarlet vermillion, and when we have raised

---

it very high we find that white, added to scarlet vermillion, alone will produce pure light red. Red-orange is a mixture of madder Lake and scarlet vermillion; is very brilliant and cools toward red when attempts are made to raise it with white alone; hence as we ascend the tonal scale, a greater proportion of scarlet vermillion is added until it becomes too red, at which time cadmium orange is used to warm it. To lower this color use madder Lake warmed or yellowed by gold-ochre or burnt sienna. Orange is found to be the most brilliant color on the palette and is obtained by adding a small touch of cadmium orange to the scarlet vermillion. Orange, in its lower registers, is made by adding the foregoing to another mixture of madder Lake and cadmium orange, or using this second alone. If still lower tonalities are desired burnt sienna (in itself a neutralized orange) is added. If the burnt sienna is not quite red enough, mix with it some "Light red" or "Venetian red," and lower still with transparent brown and madder Lake. To raise it we add first cadmium orange and white, then "medium cadmium yellow" and white and lastly, "light cadmium yellow" and white. Yellow-orange is approximately "cadmium orange." (In any case where these colors vary, the addition of yellow or madder will correct them.) To raise it add "cadmium, medium" and white, or "cadmium yellow, light," and white. Gold-ochre is a neutralized yellow orange and when added to cadmium orange lowers its tonality. To further lower it add burnt sienna and "cadmium medium;" to go still lower add transparent brown (a lowered yellow-orange). Another way of mixing a saturated and beautiful yellow-orange is to follow the same method already stated for orange, namely, mix madder Lake and "cadmium yellow, medium." This completes our spectrum and gives us the very best results with the pigments at hand.

## THE PALETTE

The artist who wishes his work to endure should give great thought to the permanency of the pigments he uses, and the following palette, the one from which all the calculations in this paper are made, has been chosen because of its plasticity, pliability, adaptability in making any tones, tints or colors required, as well as for the fact that the colors are all permanent. Also following our idea for ordering our palette for greater convenience

---

and to reproduce as nearly as possible our spectrum on the palette (thereby keeping it ever before our eyes) I shall place after every pigment's name, its place as well. Starting with white, which for the best results should be a mixture of one part of zinc to one part of silver, and placing it slightly to the right of the center of our palette's outer edge, we proceed to the left with the color nearest white in tonality; light cadmium yellow, then cadmium yellow, medium; cadmium orange; scarlet vermillion; madder Lake; cobalt violet; ultramarine blue; cobalt blue; cerulean blue; viridian green (emeraude). Now going to the right side of the white and placing them in rotation, come the neutralized and neutralizing colors. Yellow-ochre or gold-ochre; Light red, burnt sienna; Transparent Brown; ivory black. It will be objected by some that the foregoing palette has unnecessary colors, and by others that I have eliminated many of the old stand-bys. Some have adopted the idea of mixing all colors from three fundamentals and to them the palette is complicated. To answer these objections a simple statement of principle is all that is necessary. First, one's palette must be adequate to the task; it must be comprised of permanent colors; it must have enough colors to save the artist the time he would otherwise require to mix them. The pigments he chooses must be as nearly saturated as possible. To answer in detail, the most complicated palette is that which has only three colors. When we speak of complications we mean complications for the painter, and this abbreviated palette makes for him a useless number of complications and robs him of his time, not to speak of the impossibility of his obtaining saturated colors from his mixtures. I would advise a greater number of pigments rather than a smaller; but before using them I should obtain authentic information as to their durable qualities. The more already mixed tints, tones, neutralizations, etc., we have, the richer our work should be and the more time we save in producing it.

## CHANGES IN THE PALETTE FOR COMMERCIAL USE

For those who are working on boardings and other designs where the original paint is used in the **finished product** there are many colors much brighter than those already named, whose relative impermanency is of no import in transient work. Every firm calls them by different names, hence it is impossible to name them without naming also the firm that makes

---

them. A few standard colors, however, can be mentioned. Emerald green can be considered pure green. A very brilliant blue-green can be made from it by mixing it with cerulean or turquoise blue. Chinese vermillion is a more brilliant red-orange than the one formerly described; mauve can easily take the place of cobalt violet in making violets and red-violets and magenta can be used as red in the latter's middle registers. All the chromes can, and usually do, replace the cadmiums. This palette is anything but tempered, some of the colors being brilliant, while others are no more brilliant than on the first palette. However, with advertising work brilliancy is at a premium, and I again advise commercial men as I have advised others, to obtain everything that will enhance and illuminate their palettes. All that has to be done to properly order these new, transient and differently named colors, is to determine their place on the spectrum. Once this is ascertained, a slight change toward one side or the other, by mixing the neighboring color, will stabilize and fix the color in its proper place. There is but one rule to follow in this stabilizing process; one thing to determine, namely, how much of any of the three primary elements is there in it? If you buy a brilliant peacock blue, look at your spectrum, Plate I, and compare it to the color nearest it. If it is greener you will immediately see how much greener; if bluer it is easily determined, and once determined it is permanently placed in your mind. Commercial work done for reproduction should adhere to the more sedate palette, because printer's ink is seldom brighter than the original colors used here.

## NEUTRALIZING COLORS

Neutralizing colors is simply graying them. An excellent way to neutralize is to add black or white, or both, to the saturated color, depending upon how gray or neutralized they are desired. Another method is to mix them with their own complementaries. But one thing must always be borne in mind; if they are neutralized with black or white they change into warmer or colder colors, at the same time that they are becoming grayed, and this change has to be rectified by the addition of warm or cold colors following the directions given under the paragraph on lowering the tonalities of saturated colors. See Plate III.



---

## COLOR IN LIGHT STUDY

Looking over a landscape or still life which we intend to paint, the light seems to fall chaotically over the multi-colored objects that comprise our subject. A very red-orange apple, placed beside a more orange one, both placed in juxtaposition to a green or purple cloth, reflect rays that seem to do nothing more than tell us what the local color of these objects is. The light that illuminates a subject seems to have little influence on the colors of the subject; but it does influence these colors enormously; indeed one might say that it is only in the half tones that we can ever see the approximate or local color of an object, and for the following reason; the light that illuminates these things is of a definite color: this definite **light-color** mixes with the **local color** of the object, the two making a **third** color which we take to be the color of the object. This third color being positive or vibrant in relation to the shadow, calls up in the eye its complementary, and this in turn is imposed upon the negative or neutral and darker shadow-part of the object where it mixes, as on a palette, with the shadow color, thereby producing a third color here also. It naturally follows that both the lighted side of this object and the shadow side appear to us falsely, different from what is actually the color of the object. Thus the half-tone standing between the light and shadow, only slightly changed by both the light-color and the complement-illusion of the shadow color, comes nearest to giving us the truth. This conclusion follows the great principal of balance, found throughout all life and all natural phenomena and is as follows: in ratio as the light falling on an object is intense, other things being equal, so the shadow is intense. Thus if a very weak light falls on a round object the shadow will be very weak. As this light increases the shadow becomes in ratio, darker. In order to visualize completely this process of plastic and variable balance-relationship, call to mind a see-saw, perfectly balanced at a central point. This center we shall consider our half-tone, or **constant-stability**. One end we shall consider as light, the other as shadow. Now picture the lifting of one side, the light side, and note how the opposite end is lowered automatically and as a corollary to the raising of the light side. So far we have spoken of simple cases of tone changes on white or colorless objects. For greater precision and definition let us take the case of a green ball having a yellow light thrown on one side; still keep-

---

ing in mind the analogy of the see-saw. On the light side, the yellow, mixed with the green, would raise the green toward light one half-tone of color, (from green to yellow-green), and consequently on the opposite side, the green or local color of the ball would be lowered just one half-tone of color toward shadow. (From green to blue-green.) A more complicated case would be that of the same yellow light falling on a round red object. Needless to say the light side would be orange, or two half-tones of color toward light from red. The shadow side would then be two half-tones of color toward shadow from red, namely violet. Let us prove this point, not by the see-saw analogy, but by the addition and subtraction of light-color on local color, and of illusion-color on local shadow-color. Thus yellow added to red equals orange, (the light side of the round red object). The orange calls up in the eye its complementary, or blue, and this, superimposed on local color in shadow, or red, equals violet. (Half red mixed with half blue.) A still more complicated example would be the yellow light on a round violet ball. On the light side, (the local color and light-color being equally strong) the yellow mixed with violet equals a gray. The half-tone would remain violet, and the shadow-color being influenced by no complementary, would become a deeper violet. With the see-saw analogy we have yellow and violet equals gray or a simple light-tone (color sensation having ceased), and hence the opposite side, having no influence except tone, remains the color it was, but travels an equal distance toward darkness. If we examine an object, the sharpness of whose facets precludes the half-tone (already having determined the color of the light falling on it), we can find its tone or approximate local color by subtracting the light color from the color its illuminated side seems to be, and raising the color of the shadow side the same number of color steps toward light that we have lowered the illuminated side; viz. blue-green on light side and blue-violet on shadow sides; light determined as yellow, we subtract the light-color (yellow) from the blue-green leaving blue, and raise the shadow side, (blue-violet) one color step toward light, making blue, which must be the local color of the object.

### NORMAL SATURATION OF COLORS

The normal saturation of colors is a term used to designate that place in the tonal scale of dark and light where the colors are at their point of greatest

---

saturation, or inherent purity and richness of chromatic intensity. Thus violet is richest and most emotional in its darker registers. Blue-violet comes next. Then in order, red, blue, blue-green, red-orange, green, orange, yellow-orange, yellow-green and last and highest yellow. Yellow becomes weakened as it is toned toward darkness, as do, in order, yellow-green, yellow-orange, orange, green and red-orange. Thus the lower tonalities of the cold side of the spectrum are the brighter and more saturated in the lower registers while the vibrant and warm colors require the high and luminous registers for their greatest effects. The observation by painters that the luminous effects nature sometimes presents to us are impossible of reproduction in our cold colors, has led them to realize the greater importance of imitating the **quality** and **degree** of **saturation** of a color rather than following the academic precepts of copying tonalities, or, as tonalities are called, "values." If one painted a blue sky as relatively light in tonality as it is, it would be necessary to use a kind of super-white as a value. If reflected lights and heavy shadows were painted in their actual values they would have no transparency nor luminosity whatever. Colors themselves seem to rebel at being too greatly changed from their inherent saturation-tones. Their characters reverse themselves, and like all things taken to unnatural extremes become finally their own "others" or opposites. Thus three unnaturally lightened dark-register colors, red-violet, red, and blue-violet become "lavender," a maudlin and sentimental nonentity; pink, the opposite of the strength color, red; and "baby blue" supersedes blue-violet, one of the richest and most thought-conducive colors of the spectrum. Yellows and oranges, scintillating with vitality and individuality, become browns, heavy and without brilliance.

### THE ANALOGY BETWEEN COLOR AND SOUND

For many years there has been growing a conviction that there is some deeply rooted, recondite analogy between color and sound. Both are demonstrably vibratory; both have a varied and definite emotional stimulus for us, and each is used as a medium for an art. Many plans and theories for color-notes have been made; many scales which purport to have some similarity to our chromatic musical scale have been put forward, but

---

in my experience all except one of these, which I shall work with in this treatise, contain discrepancies in harmonization, neutralization, etc. This scale or order of notes is given on Plate 1, and after working with it for fifteen years I find more and more the justness of its intervals, and its complete adaptability to every demand put upon it to achieve color-harmony, simple or intricate. Like the piano keyboard itself, (one note of which may vary greatly from the same note on another keyboard, and still remain perfectly relative to its own keyboard) **the interval between the notes is the important thing.** Thus starting with a pure yellow and traveling to the left we reach one half color-note from it, yellow-orange. The relation of this yellow-orange to the yellow, viz. the degree of red influence it has is what places it rightly or wrongly. The orange, next, must have a certain degree of red in relation to yellow, and so on through the whole chromatic cycle, each color being placed a positively related distance from the color on either side, and from its opposite; indeed, holding a fixed position between two flanking colors, these two holding fixed positions between four others which, in turn, are related to their environing colors. If, for yellow-orange we choose a color which has too much red or too much yellow, in relation to yellow itself, it is obvious that every combination we place it in would be overbalanced on the side of the preponderating color. Call up to mind the sound of someone singing a melody, a few of the notes being in pitch and a few flat or sharp; or better still, picture three persons singing in concert and two singing flat or sharp. The sound is ludicrous, and certainly valueless as harmony. To the trained color sensitivity the usual painting is just such a ludicrous thing and indeed, were it not that the landscape, still-life, portrait or figure, in other words, the **subject**, is more important than the way the subject is expressed, the general public would more quickly be able to sense the total lack of color harmony there. But whether the scientists can or cannot demonstrate the similarity between these two great mediums of the arts, our own emotional reactions to them tell us that there exists a positive parallel. Many times, in painting, I have placed in juxtaposition three or more colors that gave me a sensation of a certain definable kind, and translating these colors into sound according to the simple plan which will be given in the following paragraph, and striking them on the piano, I have gotten again through the ear precisely the



---

same quality of sensation. Not satisfied with my own reactions I have called in sensitive painters and musicians and with no word of explanation, they have had, and described to me the same reactions. Again, finding that a certain combination of three colors pleased me when placed in juxtaposition in a picture, and wishing to place definitely their key and find their source, I have struck them on a piano. Feeling that there was something lacking, I have searched until I have found a fourth note to strike with the original three, to which combination of four notes I have reacted similarly as to the color combination. Going back to the picture I have invariably found that the fourth note corresponds to a fourth color lying near the original group of three and which I had taken no account of before. This fourth color nevertheless, had been caught up and related to the group of three subconsciously, and my reaction had been to a four-color chord instead of a three-color chord as I originally believed. Then covering up this fourth color I have witnessed that the three I believed gave me the reaction, were powerless without this fourth one. Other pictures I have exhibited have affected persons so definitely that they have come and told me of it. One writer came to me and, speaking of a large canvas then on exhibition, told me it affected him unpleasantly as color, that is seemed entirely too sentimental. I appreciated his contention when I realized that the corresponding musical key was A Flat.

## THE SCALE

The color scale, or real chromatic (colored) scale, is formed by dividing the spectrum into the twelve color notes already given. We immediately have a parallel with our sound-scale or complete octave in which all our music is written. From this cycle of twelve notes there are chosen seven notes, this group being called the diatonic scale. These notes are the do, re, mi, etc., of the elementary school, and their pitch from low to high, or bass to treble depends upon the position on the keyboard of their tonic or starting note. Thus starting on C we have the diatonic scale in the key of our first note, or C. The interval on the piano keyboard between do, and the next note up in the scale, re, and the relationship of the following notes, mi, fa, so, la, ti, to the beginning note, or C, produce a scale whose whole character, while not being identical with the character of C, is yet based on

---

C. To get a picture, as it were, of the foregoing condition, call to mind a round spot of color floating before your eyes and six other related colors, as the re, mi, fa, so, la, ti, revolving about this color like planets around the sun, held to it by some sort of magnetic attraction. By some mysterious process this color has first produced two others, and this group of three, four others, all affected by the colored-ray atmosphere coming from this first generating color. These revolving colors form themselves into changing, melting groups of two, three and four, continually forming new combinations. Now if possible conjure up another color not comprised in this color-cosmos and you will feel that this new color is repelled by the others and seems of a different world; from a different light-plane, in other words, completely out of harmony with the other seven. This is the character of the scale-manifestation; an interdependence of divergent elements bound together by some esoteric relational means. Just why there are twelve notes instead of more or less, in our sound-spectrum, if I may use the term, than there are in Oriental scales, is a problem for esthetics to solve, but that there are twelve is the fact we must start with. Why, from these twelve, seven are chosen, I also believe to be inexplicable by science, but this seemingly mysterious and arbitrary choice of number we must accept as an accomplished fact. At any rate, there are, besides custom, many things which cannot but recommend the existing scale construction to the mind of the thinker. Its diversity permits of the implication that the twelve points of the chromatic gamut are accounted for, without bringing in notes that "feel" out of place there. The small interval between the third and fourth notes, and the seventh and eighth (or beginning of another octave) permits consecutive sequences of sound. The larger intervals give larger steps. There is also one set of opposites as a contrast to the several soft and harmonious combinations. Thus we have the complementary or harsh, with the harmonic or soft; a self-contained balance of separate groups as well as a larger, more extended balance of the whole; the wonderful possibility of modulation from it to another key or sound atmosphere, and the vitally necessary function of continually throwing itself out of balance in order to be re-balanced elsewhere. This last reproduces the principle of movement as we know movement to manifest itself, by the displacement of the centre of gravity and the re-establishment of equilibrium. The tonic chord or

---

combination of three notes which, by their approximate equipoise, imply all the sounds of the complete octave gives us the realization of its **character** by immediately transporting us into that particular sound-atmosphere that is inherent to its key. To form this tonic chord we start with any note. The choice of this note is arbitrary and depends upon the character of emotional relation we desire. From it we go up four consecutive notes making with the first or starting note, the fifth of the full octave or "chromatic" scale, next going up three more, making the eighth in the chromatic scale. It will be noticed that if, from the starting note, we ascend as before, that is, four notes, then four more instead of three, as before, we have formed an equal-sided triangle on our round chart and hence divided our spectrum into three equal parts. In the tonic chord the interval from the starting note to the second note is one-third of the spectrum, or four notes, but the interval from the second note to the third is only one-fourth, or three notes. If this chord, namely the first, fifth and eighth notes equally divided the spectrum (being equi-distant apart), no harmony in the classical sense would be possible, but being placed, in the tonic chord, just to one side of absolute balance they give us the esthetic reaction of balance, while actually leaving one small gap of unbalance through which it is possible for us to proceed to further developments. To make this plainer let us arrange the musical octave on a round diagram as we have arranged the color octave. On this, following the same rule as color-complementaries, opposites such as C natural and F sharp, when struck together, would produce noise instead of sound; in other words their vibrations being numerically antipathetical they would cease to have any harmonic significance. As a negation of sound they are in direct conflict with each other and hence mutually destroy each other. These two colors or sounds are equi-distant from each other. They divide the sound or color spectrum equally. Now, taking three colors, namely, red, yellow and blue (equi-distant apart) and mixing them together we arrive at the same result; gray, or negation, because they too, counter-balance each other. With four colors equi-distant apart such as orange, yellow-green, blue and red-violet the result is not changed. Thus when in forming a chord of color or sound, if we make the notes equi-distant apart we form a negative or characterless combination, all possibility of progression in a given direction is at a stand still. In

---

music such a chord's chief use is in modulation, that is, as a transitional step toward a different key. Its small residue of character is felt only because it is impossible to sound each note exactly like the others, and the one that impinges on the ear, due to its loudness or highness, or to the inexactitude of the piano's vibrational ratio, is the one which gives it its character. If we leave, as we must, one small element of unbalance we produce the emotional effect of balance as has already been demonstrated while not being absolutely in mathematical balance, and by the group's overbalance in one direction or another we produce a distinct **character of balance**, which character is of the note, or related to the note on which we base our scale, viz., our starting note. The scale, then, is an instrument by means of which we may always be sure of approximate harmony. Its internal division permits us to obtain the greatest harmony with the greatest contrast possible with two, three, four or seven colors. At a glance it informs us of the harshest opposites, the softest harmonies and the most perfect combinations. It is always relative to itself, being a complete cosmos, and it shadows forth the principle of action and reaction within the given boundaries of a definite emotional atmosphere. For the serious artist it is primarily a time saver, and a touchstone to which he may refer for correction and color-sensitivity training. It is not a system, theory or shortcut to the profuse production of genius! It is a keyboard, neither more nor less and the proper use of this keyboard depends upon the emotional and intellectual grasp of the serious artist.

### EMOTIONAL MEANINGS OF COLOR

(In speaking of colors, I shall describe them as though they were conscious, rational beings, having defined characters or temperaments.) Yellow is superficial, has no depth of character, is frivolous, light, young-girlish and gay. Yellow-green is like a spring landscape, extremely cheerful, inconsequential, very youthful, but still having more meaning (in the sense of stability), than yellow. Green is the normal color. It is weak, lackadaisical and seems to have arrived at a point where it halts contentedly, a disciple of non-action, of calm, of quiet. Blue-green has a richness, a seeming diversity, which is lacking in green. This richness is felt, because with



---

a small residue of gayness, it combines a large preponderance of ethereality. Thus it is more spiritual than green, because green is an absolute balance of light and shadow. In blue-green there is a quality of remembered things, of sadness; and sadness always implies feeling. Blue is the color of ethereality, of shadow, of softness, of anti-materialism, a supra-mundane condition. It is highly spiritual, has little obtrusive character and its quality of transparency and elusiveness tends to soften it to a state of tolerance. Blue-violet is the introspective, the inspirational color. It has the same amount of spirituality as blue-green, but has also a degree of strength or positive vitality. It is the color of night, of far distances, of vibrating transparencies. Violet, we might sum up as being a cry, *de profundis*. It is the color of deepest depression which comprises unhappiness, sorrow, silence and the nearest approach to death in color. It seems a threshold from which one sees mysterious phantoms of another world moving in never changing paths. It seems to be almost that condition where one sleeps and is yet awake. Red-violet has come back from the tomb and gathers its forces for action. It is strong, rich in potentialities, profound, plotting, almost ominous in its hidden possibilities. Red is strength; a dynamo; a self-contained reservoir of vitality whose very knowledge of its own strength makes it calm. It seems to be the vital spark of life to the spectrum. One touch of it brings violet from the depths to a new life or kindles to intensest flame the adolescent thoughtlessness of yellow. Red is deep, self-reliant and dignified by its conscious power. Red-orange is a weaker red by being nearer light, or yellow. It appears to have the greatest power of any, and while not a braggart, it does not hide its possibilities. It is martial, blatant, self-satisfied and harsh. It is like a trombone in quality while red is more like a tuba. It is all for action, and action with a definite aim. Orange is the most blatant braggart of all; the most intense light and the loudest-voiced, in its inherent saturation. But toned down, it becomes more mellow and softer, more akin to red. Thus it has two sides to its character, the loud and brilliant-hued, and the soft and thoughtful. Yellow-orange has also a braggart tendency but at bottom it is weak and sickly. It is like the last pretences dying in a pompous soul. On this account it has a quasi-sad note, like an old man who feels senility to be not far off.

---

## FORMATION OF THE SCALE

To give a history of our present day diatonic scale would not add to our efficiency in using it. Suffice it to say that although many men have tried to use older or newer interval-divisions in forming different scales, they have achieved no lasting revolution, nor have they written music of the greatest calibre with them. The present scale-form is perhaps as nearly perfect as it is possible to conceive for the reason of its diversity of effects, its smoothness of sequence and its richness of contrasts. To form it, seven notes are chosen, after a given plan, from the chromatic scale. Starting at the color with whose character you wish to invest the scale, and traveling in a clockwise direction, we skip one color thus stopping on the second color from the starting color. (From yellow as a start, we skip yellow-green, and stop on green.) This color is the second color of the scale or the **second "degree."** Repeat this process and you arrive at blue, having skipped blue-green. Blue is thus the third color or **third "degree"** of the scale. The next step is to the next note or from blue to blue-violet, which latter color becomes the fourth color or degree. For the fifth, we skip one, violet, arriving at red-violet. Repeat this skipping process twice more, arriving in order at red-orange (having skipped red) and yellow-orange (having skipped orange). This brings us back to yellow, the beginning of another octave which is the next note after yellow-orange. This method of forming the scale is as follows: from your first chosen note (which is your **first degree**) skip one, skip one, take the next; skip one, skip one, skip one, take the next. This last includes your starting note and begins a second octave of the same scale. The point to remember then, starting on any color, the second from it is taken, the second from it, the next, second, second, second and lastly the next, or two, two, one, two, two, two, one. As an example, starting on red, our next color is orange; red being the **first degree** and orange the second, next comes yellow (third degree) next yellow-green, (fourth degree), next blue-green (fifth), blue-violet (sixth), red-violet (seventh). These scales are worked out in color by method of the covering cardboard circles. To form the tonic chord, which is a combination of three colors that imply by their approximate balance the entire scale as well as the whole spectrum, we decide on a color as the starting note (first degree note or tonic note because it sets the tone or color-atmosphere for the whole scale). Place beside it our

---

third degree note (or mediant) and thirdly our fifth degree note, or dominant. (The term dominant is a misnomer; it merely forms an harmonic near-complementary to the tonic). In the scale of yellow, then, the tonic chord is yellow, blue and red-violet. In the scale of red, the tonic chord is red, yellow and blue-green. There are three common or principle chords in every scale; they are the tonic already mentioned; the chord formed on the fifth degree or the dominant chord; and the chord formed on the fourth degree or sub-dominant. To find these easily we must find our scale on the spectrum, write several octaves of it down numbering our degrees; then starting on the first, fourth or fifth we take every alternate color up to three or four colors, depending upon how extended or full we desire our harmony chord. Thus in the scale of yellow we have; yellow (1), green (2), blue (3), blue-violet (4), red violet (5), red-orange (6), yellow-orange (7), yellow (1), green (2), etc. The tonic chord is the first, third and fifth. The chord of the fourth is the fourth (blue-violet), sixth (red-orange), and the eighth or first (yellow). The chord on the fifth or dominant is the fifth (red-violet), seventh (yellow-orange), and the second green). There are chord formations on the other degrees as well but these are the principal ones for simple use. The complications that would ensue in studying the numerous diminished, augmented, double diminished chords, etc., are not worth the student's time and for this reason any changes he may use either consciously or accidentally must answer to his own sensitivity. The foregoing is a description of the major or normal scale and differs materially in effect from the minor scale. Thus we find that in painting a picture in a given scale the first, fourth and fifth are our important chords; or, rather, all the other chords must be made subsidiary to it. To form the minor scale which has a subtle air of sadness or incompleteness, our interval jumps change. Instead of two, two, one, two, two, two, one, like the major, we have for the minor, two, one, two, two, one, three, one. Thus for a yellow minor scale we have the colors in order with their degrees numbered, yellow (1), green (2), blue-green (3) blue-violet (4), red-violet (5), red (6), yellow-orange (7), and back to the eighth or first degree, yellow, again. As in the major scale, the tonic or first degree chord, the fourth degree chord and the fifth or dominant chord are the most important, and are all found by the same method used in the major scale. In commercial work, if four colors can be used, we simply take, as in the tonic chord, the first,

---

third, and fifth degree colors, and add the seventh. Thus in writing down several consecutive octaves of the scales which succeed each other in regular order we take as many alternate colors as our color-scheme permits. All color-schemes obtained in this way are chords in the key or scale from which they come and this scale is called by the color on which it is begun. For example, starting on yellow, all the chords obtained from the seven notes of the scale are called chords in the key of yellow. For a particularly brilliant, though characterless effect, we may take two sets of complementaries, all four colors being equi-distant apart (such as red-orange and blue-green; yellow and violet) and place them on a flat field of another color, indeed any one of the eight remaining colors.

### COLOR COMBINATIONS AND THEIR EFFECTS

If a harsh clash is desired, use red-orange and blue-green. For a clash less harsh use orange and blue. All sets of complementaries follow in the order of their harshness; yellow-orange and blue-violet; yellow-green and red-violet; green and red; and softest of all opposites, yellow and violet. These last two appear softer because they become, by their inherent qualities of high luminosity and deep shadow, more tonal than colored. Soft and harmonious combinations of two colors are those which stand one color to either side of the absolute complementary, such as, yellow-green and violet; yellow-green and red; yellow-orange and blue; yellow-orange and violet; yellow and blue-violet; yellow and red-violet; orange and blue-green; orange and blue-violet; and green and red-violet. Green and red-orange taken together seem almost as harsh as a complementary set, but this is because red-orange is so contrasted in character to green, is so assertive itself and is of so brilliant a saturation. (In saturation it is a close second to scarlet vermilion.) This last objection to red-orange and green is obviated when red-orange is neutralized or toned toward white or black. A good rule to keep in mind for color combinations is as follows: the greater the neutralization the less clash of otherwise antipathetic colors. As colors are neutralized they lose their positiveness of character and, becoming weakened, can no longer rebel against being placed in inharmonious surroundings. This same rule may also be applied to colors that have been lowered in tonality, while still keeping, as much as possible, their full saturation. Thus in the first



---

place light grays (tints) of various colors rest more easily together than the same colors before they are grayed or neutralized. Many very dark colors such as those one sees on woodwork or in the wearing apparel of men, do not particularly afflict the color-sensitive eye because these colors are so near neutrality or colorlessness that their characters are in abeyance. In the second case, that of lowered saturated colors, such combinations as warm browns, with still darker and warmer browns are often admired because, being yellow-oranges, oranges and yellows, taken from their inherent register of saturation, they have really become their own opposites, that is to say, they have lost their original characters by the stress of the circumstances they have been subjected to and have become heavy, inactive and only slightly-colored tones. The most brilliant combination possible to use is orange and green. There is in each a half measure of light (yellow), the other half of one being shadow (blue), and half of the other being strength (red). These two, when used in their full brilliancy, form a pair at which it is difficult to look fixedly. Still softer combinations of two colors than the harmonious ones mentioned above, that is to say, those which stand one color to either side of the complementary line, the same interval in fact, as that between a tonic and dominant (yellow and red-violet) are what is known as major thirds. These are the combinations, one color of which stands two colors to either side the complementary line. They are as follows: yellow and blue; yellow-green and blue-violet; green and violet; blue-green and red-violet; blue and red; blue-violet and red-orange; violet and orange; red-violet and yellow-orange; red and yellow red-orange and yellow-green; orange and green; yellow-orange and blue-green. It will be noted that the interval between these is the same as from a tonic note to a third, or mediant. If a harsh but striking combination of three very contrasting colors is desired we simply divide the spectrum into three equal parts and use that color on which each segment strikes, viz., red, yellow, blue; red orange, yellow-green, blue-violet; orange, green, violet; yellow-orange, blue-green and red-violet, etc. To harmonize these three, one is shifted to a color standing on either side of it, viz., red-orange, (instead of red), yellow, blue; or red, yellow-orange (instead of yellow), blue; or red, yellow and blue-green (instead of blue). This last combination, it will be noticed, is the tonic chord of the scale of red. If

---

we were to change two of the colors instead of one, we would construct the tonic chord of the minor scale of red, namely red, yellow-orange (moved back from yellow) and blue-green (moved back from blue.) Now if we move these colors in the opposite direction, viz., red, yellow-green (moved forward from yellow) and blue-violet (moved forward from blue), we have the tonic chord of the major scale of yellow-green. As it will be evident to all that any three colors which by their divergence imply (give one the impression of including) the entire spectrum and which do not include a set of complementaries, fall naturally into some kind of harmony. The foregoing color groups, to be harmonious must be isolated and not used in the same picture with definite scales to which they are not related by regular and usual intervals.

### EMOTIONAL MEANINGS OF COLOR SCALES

For a picture painted in the key of yellow, the painter should chose a subject that is radiant, joyous, lively, sunny and of no great solidity. For yellow-green, a subject in which is desired freshness, youthfulness, a feeling of spring and poetry. This scale is like a spring landscape, freshly washed by rain, delicate and adolescent. For green, a subject in which calm is desired; where the movement is not violent, although the forms may be rugged; where gentleness and peace pervade the atmosphere. For blue-green, a subject that is serious, has many rich relationships of parts, not too sonorous, nor too solidly set upon a base, but replete with sudden changes, great contrasts and a certain strength underlying its seeming playfulness. For the blue scale, a subject soft and even sentimental; also one that has spirituality and will call up thoughts of the past without taking away entirely the realization of the present. For blue-violet, a subject that is solid, well planted; a distinctly masculine subject where the reaction desired is more of thought than of feeling. The scale of violet is dramatic, dignified, solid; has a pliability that permits of quick movement and gracefulness. The red-violet scale is instinct with great things. Strength, richness and even softness are possible here. Red is the great energetic contrast scale. It is beautifully harmonized, is simple and honest, but to see and to feel the beauty of this scale requires more sensitivity than for most other scales. Red-orange is violent, and as a scale requires a

---

subject in which there are violent contrast, harsh shocks and frenzied action. Orange can be either loud or soft as a scale. It gives us the sensation of febrile gaiety, and quickness, or of soft, solid dignity. It is either mercurial or magistral. Yellow-orange, while being rich, is at bottom weak. It has dignity, but the dignity of hopelessness. It is gracious and suave and has an evanescent quality peculiar to itself. Following are tentative subjects for the twelve scales: yellow, portrait of a young girl of delicacy and refinement; yellow-green, spring landscape or rustic and happy scene; green, a summer landscape, a peaceful interior, the portrait of a thoughtful man. Blue-green, a lively street scene, where the angles of houses are in strong tonal contrast to the sky; where there is a great divergence of colored dresses, but where the foreground is rich with large masses of brilliant color. Blue, a seascape at sunset; a mellow and cool interior in the late summer afternoon; a scene in which there is pathetic or sentimental appeal. Blue-violet, a landscape where the rock forms jut ruggedly into the sky and the sunlight flecks the hills; a portrait of a thoughtful but a nervous person; indeed, almost any subject where there is a variety of contrasts. The violet scale is dramatic, whereas the red-violet scale is portentous. A calm before the storm, in red-violet, and the storm itself in violet. The red scale permits of no subject that is ambiguous, ethereal or weakly. In it we must paint things where every detail is on view, where light and thought prevade the whole. The example of a sunrise will give some idea of the red scale's inherent possibilities. The red-orange is equivocal, and by changes in its saturations can serve almost every purpose where calm, introspection and peace are **not** desired. If we paint a portrait in orange it must be of great dignity; its background must be rich and sonorous; its expression must be kindly, intelligent and frank, but never sentimental nor smirking. The yellow-orange scale is eminently adapted to painting autumn landscapes; indeed any scene where the desired emotion is that of waning strength, or slowly dying vitality. It will be obvious at this point that scales formed on certain notes do not give us the emotional reaction of their key or starting color alone, but if we analyze the scale meanings we shall see how this larger emotion-meaning comes about. For example let us analyze the yellow tonic chord, which implies the entire yellow diatonic scale. Yellow, then, is joyous, inconsequential; blue,

---

its mediant, is ethereal, has little character, is evanescent. Red-violet, the dominant, is replete with potentialities, with growing strength. Thus we have the qualities of youthfulness, such as gaiety, lack of materialism, and little-defined character, of being in process of development, and of storing up strength for the future. Thus we say that the yellow scale is the youthful feminine scale; gay and light, with future strength and unworldly character. The other scales can be interpretatively analyzed by the same method.

### THE APPLICATION OF HARMONY TO NATURALISTIC PAINTINGS

It may be objected that in painting a landscape, portrait, figure or still-life, the painter sees the subject before him and must paint it as it is. Unfortunately he generally does, and perhaps this blind adherence to the visual stimulus is the cause of so much worthless work. Surely the serious painter must realize that his subject is merely an inspiration to the end of making a work of art; is that impelling cause whose effect is an ordered and harmonious canvas. No talented man paints every detail he sees. Some he unconsciously recognizes as being unimportant, others he consciously changes to the needs of his composition, indeed, before he decides to paint at all, he searches at great length for a landscape that approaches his desires, he drapes his sitter many times to arrange the folds of a gown to his satisfaction, or, in painting still-life he places and re-places his fruits, dishes and drapes until they present what he considers a beautiful mass. I think no painter ever lived who could accept as a subject for his brush, every landscape, every pose of a model, every chaotic grouping of still-life. Yet there are few painters, who, to re-arrange nature's chaotic colors change them to bring it nearer an ideal of harmony, as they change and chose and re-arrange other things. To copy nature implicitly implies many kinds of ignorance. It shows that one considers nature and art to be the same thing; it exposes the greatest misunderstanding of the precepts of the masters who postulated the continual study of nature. The meaning of the masters is simple and frank and is to the effect that the principles, or unalterable natural laws, which are nature, be studied; viz. balance, contrast, action and re-ac-



---

tion and the unification in multiplicity, etc., not the superficial aspects of nature. No graphic talent can equal the colored photograph for accuracy, but in a camera which takes such pictures, there is no sense of order or balance; no creative intelligence which takes a chaos existing before its lens and makes of the relationships found there, plus a directing intellect, a new cosmos of new matter, wholly different from the other, and having imprinted upon it an individual character. This is the artist's work; not the machine's, and if this is not done, no work of art is made. The machine is thus a slavish thing; it imitates deformities and discords, harmonies of color and form, impartially. Surely the human being capable of feeling the beautiful relations of form and color, and capable also of feeling that which is ugly, or unrelated, has a right, a duty, to omit these things which militate against his own desires and preferences, from his work. Needless to say, the great artist chooses carefully, and that matter which does not enhance and further his scheme, he considers as a retarding and destructive force. Where heretofore he has had to depend utterly upon his sensitive reaction as regards color harmony, he may, with this chart, be sure of his ground. The absolute, final harmonization of colors, the fine graduations of harmony, must completely satisfy his own eye and color sense, just as the sensitive ear is more completely satisfied when music is played on stringed instruments (the piano being a compromise for means of transposition); but his general and approximate harmonies are to be had here, as nearly perfect as approximate things can be, and quite as closely related as the notes of the piano. We shall take as the first instance, the painting of a portrait, in which we use a complete color scale. As we have spoken before of the yellow scale as that being eminently adapted to the painting of a young girl, we shall use this as our example. She is youthful, blond and slight, and we dress her in blue. Her hair is yellow, and in our background we show some touches (large or saturated enough to be of importance), of red-violet. This gives us our tonic chord, but with this we have four other colors to complete our scale. They are green, blue-violet, red-orange and yellow-orange. In the folds of the red-violet drape will be suggestions of dark, neutralized greens. We may place near her some neutralized red-orange flowers whose stems and leaves are green. The red-orange, neutralized toward white forms the "pink" of her cheeks and the delicate tints of her hands and lips. The yellow-orange is found in her hair, with the yellow, and both these col-

---

ors are used, brilliant as well as toned down. If she were in white, the background could be blue and the shadows of her flesh and even those of her dress could be tints of red-violet. If she is not blond, saturated yellow flowers could be used. The foregoing presupposes the possibility of the artist's arranging his sitter as he desires. If, on the contrary, a young girl presents herself in a green dress, and, having dark hair and a sallow complexion, it is then that the painter must use all his ingenuity. Her skin is a pasty neutralized yellow-orange which he must change to a very light orange in order to make her seem fresher and healthier. Thus he has orange and green to start with and there are two ways he may proceed from the necessary green of the dress. First, if he considers her lips and complexion red-orange, which is the dominant in the scale of green, he adds violet as the scale's mediant, or third degree. If he consider her flesh as orange, then green is the mediant and blue-violet the dominant. He chooses the scale, then, of orange, and arranges a drape of blue-violet, light or dark. These three colors, orange, green, and blue-violet being his tonic chord, he finds that yellow, blue-green, red-violet and red-orange fall naturally into different shadows or lights. Yellow will be in the high lights on her hair or flesh, or might be introduced in a flower. Blue-green will be seen in the shadows of the green dress. Red-violet in the shadows of her flesh and red-orange in the more highly colored lips, nails and cheeks. All these colors may be either neutralized or toned to low or high registers, but if the scale is complete the general color harmony will be infinitely richer. In painting such pictures, where the artist exercises his right to put in order the chaotic colors presented to him, he should remember the importance of laying the greatest stress on the three colors of the tonic chord; next greatest stress on the dominant chord and lastly the chord of the fourth degree. To utilize these chords correctly and for their greatest effect, the colors which form them should be brought into close juxtaposition. For instance at a distance where the picture is seen only as several large masses, the tonic chord should be evident. Coming closer, the dominant becomes plainer and at about the correct distance for viewing the canvas, the chord of the fourth should also make itself felt. For another example of necessary change of color to achieve harmony, let us call to mind a landscape we have seen or painted. In the foreground there is plowed ground half in shadow, half in

---

sunlight. Its actual color is a deep, neutralized orange in the sunlight and a neutralized dark-toned red-violet in the shadow. Beyond it are low rolling hills covered with tender green and still beyond these are the violet and blue-violet mountains; the sky shaded from blue-green at the horizon, through blue, to blue-violet at the zenith. There are trees in the foreground and middle distance; the nearest being greenish with blue-violet shadows and the more distant ones, colder with more violet shadows. In viewing this with the intention of painting it, we mentally make note of the more important forms and masses; the details which we can use and those we must eliminate. The mountains are necessarily one of our first considerations. Their colors, blue-violet, violet, red-violet in some part and blue-green in others, give us a great latitude for harmonization. The tender green and light earth-color with which the hills are covered is harder to determine. We may use yellow-green, green, or blue-green for the fresh growth, and orange or yellow-orange for the light-tones earth-color. The foreground of plowed ground might be deep neutralized orange or red-orange, and its shadow violet, red-violet, or even neutralized red. From these varied possibilities we make our choice. Suppose we take the scale of green. In this scale are (1) green, (2) blue, (3) violet, (4) red-violet, (5) red-orange, (6) yellow-orange, (7) yellow-green, and back to green. Following is their application. Foreground of plowed earth, deep neutralized red-orange, its shadow neutralized violet; the trees, green and yellow-green with violet and blue shadows; middle distance of rolling hills, light green and neutralized light yellow-orange; the trees bluish and greenish with light violet shadows. Background of mountains and sky; the mountains of violet with details of blue and red-violet and the sky blue at the horizon shading quickly up to violet. We see that by a slight change a discord is made into a harmony and even when, for instance, the mountains of a landscape are definitely a color which does not enter into the scale we have chosen, we as definitely change it to the color we desire.

### THE SCALE PRINCIPLE

Underlying these changes that we make when painting from nature, there is a more profound reason than is generally suspected. A landscape stretching away to the far horizon line, influenced in the distance by the

---

blue haze of air lying between it and the spectator is, in spite of its discordant colors, bound into a close homogeneous oneness by the uniformity of light falling upon it. This light, clearcut and definitely colored close to us, ordinarily loses its original color-character as the miles intervene and becomes a simple or different illumination afar off. But in spite of this color or distance-change, the abstract principle of homogeneity is exemplified by the exact, uniform and logical way every object, protuberance, hollow and color is affected by this vast, even and uniform binding element of light. This fusing of divergent things together into one whole, into one interrelated singleness, is the function and result of this principle. Upon canvas, where there is no distance, no light which becomes bluer or warmer as it advances or recedes, nothing indeed but a flat surface where even the softening quality of distance is absent, we must, above all things put this unity-principle to work. The method of expressing it is by using the scales, for this is the function and result of the scale-use; to bring divergent characters into a singleness of effect. This singleness of effect is synonymous with a definite character or definite color-atmosphere, a world, as it were, where there is a uniformity of illumination or a group of related emotions. Thus the scale, when utilized with intelligence takes the place of the sun in nature, and binds all things or colors (because in painting we enter a world where color is everything), into a close-knit unity. In music and painting the utilization of the scale is merely man's way of stating his belief in the possible existence of complete perfection.

## FUNCTION OF BLACK AND WHITE

These two conditions, as we have stated in the first part of this book can only be approximated. But as pigment, used to neutralize color, black and white serve to expedite the many necessary operations of the painter. It might be said that white in the color scale, or color-light scale takes a middle position between black, and white light; namely, the same position that middle neutral gray takes in the pigment-color scale. By "middle position" is meant the tone or value of the gray on a spinning disc exactly half of which is covered with black velvet, and half with flake white. To describe further its possibilities it may be considered as a step toward some other color, or a step away from it; a dividing space as it were, or a space



---

where a sense of nothingness or blankness is desired. This is true of white and black as well, they are both used as contrast, negation, or transition, except in those rare instances where a high light or a deep, dead shadow calls for the extremes of tonal difference. To differentiate white from black more fully we must resort to analogy. Black, in music, would be the time-interval between the beats of the tempo; the silence which exists when the drum is not striking. It is thus negation, the absence of either sound or noise. White is a positive condition, characterless because absolutely complete, (all complete things, being balanced things, do not have preponderant characteristics and hence have no definable characters,) inharmonious, because harmony must be of a certain character. The quality of white then, in music is an ideal noise, that is to say, an impossible condition where all sound vibrations combine to make a unity of balance and present themselves as one unique thing, a singleness-condition. In light we have an approximation to whiteness. In sound such a condition would be a vast combination of every divergent vibration-ratio, struck together and in which no single note could be detected. In its application the following may be postulated; on a large field of black a small spot of saturated color will dominate, (attract the attention). On a large field of white only those colors of the spectrum extending from yellow-orange to red-violet, inclusive (through red) will dominate; on a large field of any brilliant color, with the exception of that part of the spectrum extending from blue to red-violet (through violet), inclusive, a small spot of black will dominate; on a large field of color made up of that part of the spectrum extending from blue to red-violet (through violet), inclusive, a small spot of white will dominate. Thus we deduct a simple rule for the possibilities of black and white in color-harmony; namely, white, being by its positive quality more akin to warm or positive colors is more harmonious with them, while black, being negative, is more harmonious with the passive colors or those colors extending from green to violet (through blue) inclusive.

### GENERAL RULES IN PICTURE CONSTRUCTION

The principle element in every work of art is balance. There must be a balance of tonal values, viz., if there is much dark tone there must be a

---

counterbalancing of light tone. If there is much color influenced by red there must be a counterbalancing amount influenced by yellow and blue. If there is much saturated color there must be even more neutralized color, or gray. Thus shadow and light are expressed, night and day, male and female. Next in importance comes the principle of *liason*, or that element that stands approximately halfway between the extremes. For example, when a picture where there are many dark tones and very light tones, there must be intermediate tones that seem to partake of both dark and light. With color a red-influenced group of colors standing as the opposite of a yellow and blue influenced group, there must be colors such as yellow-orange or violet to weld the two groups together. This welding of two opposites is made possible in color because yellow- orange and violet partake of both of the given extremes. With saturated colors and grays there must be colors which are neither gray nor saturated, but which stand halfway between these extremes of opposition. These intermediate steps described above are like the mediants in tonic chords, they are the center of the see-saw, the ground, as it were, on which both ends meet. The absolute amount of color and gray, dark tone and light tone, color-influence with complementary color-influence can only be determined by the sensitivity of the painter himself and changes in relation to the effect he wishes to achieve.

Do not copy nature slavishly, but choose what will enhance the desired effect only. Never make the mistake, however, of trying to paint from memory or from pure invention. This last always results in a thin and unconvincing picture, for the reason that man's mind can never imagine the infinite number of significant relationships to be found in the simplest subject. Without these relationships before him, suggesting ever new and rich combinations of color he makes a vapidly logical, and hence dead, design.

Do not rest satisfied with the spectrums given in this book nor hold to these as final and complete color-scales. If in place of our spectrum here given we want one beginning with yellow-yellow-green (instead of yellow), and proceeding to blue-green-green (instead of green), blue-blue-green, instead of blue-green, etc.) we simply move our whole interval-relation slightly around to the right. It must be remembered that the interval

---

between the colors **is of the greatest importance** and that the **colors are merely stopping places** or divisions for the interval-distances which are **always identical**.

### NOTE

The expression "inherent saturation" designates the tonal point where colors are most saturated. For example, blue-violet is most saturated in low tonalities while yellow's greatest saturation is in the lightest tonalities.

The word "chromatic" when used in conjunction with "scale" designates every successive color in the spectrum. When used with "value" it means simply color saturation.





3 5282 00296 6599

ND237

.m19

53

~~759.1~~

~~ML35~~

STACKS ND237.M19 S3  
Macdonald-Wright, Stanton,  
The art of Stanton Macdonald-Wright



3 5282 00296 6599